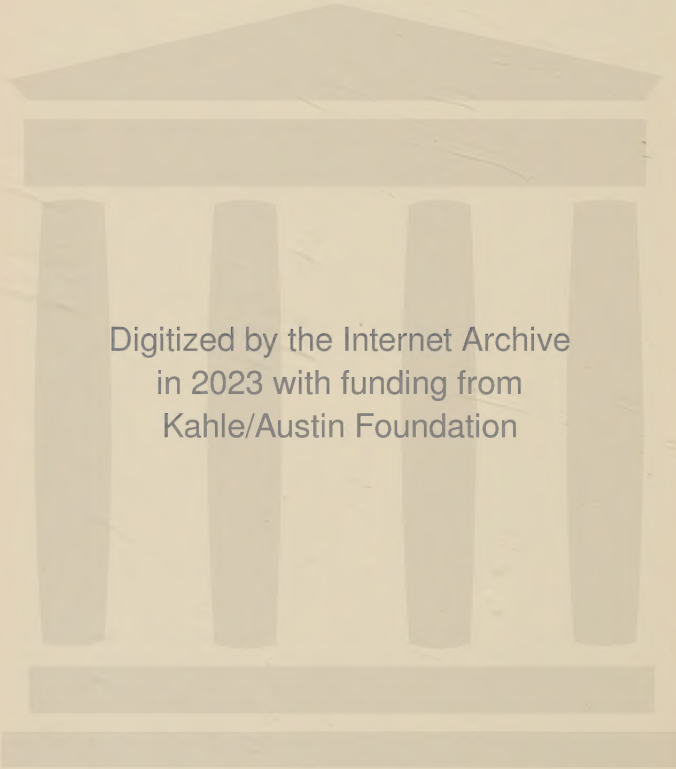


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A HISTORY OF FRANCE

VOL. V

FRANCE IN 1515

A
HISTORY OF
FRANCE

FROM THE DEATH OF

LOUIS XI

BY

JOHN S. C. BRIDGE

VOLUME V

FRANCE IN 1515

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XXIX

POLITICAL CONDITIONS

GROWTH OF UNITY. POPULATION

IN the course of a long journey the traveller of a reflective turn of mind will be tempted to call a halt in some coign of vantage, that he may review the incidents of travel, take stock of his progress, look back upon the country which he has traversed, and survey the land through which his future path will lie. Behind him are places to which he could pay but scant attention amid the bustle and stir of the road; of these he would fain hear more: and before him is a strange region, of which he may profitably gain some knowledge, ere he pursues his way. There is a guide at his elbow, who is ready to tell what he knows. It may be that the fellow will prattle of matters beyond a mere guide's ken; but it has been his fortune to hear the talk of men speaking with authority; and if he will rehearse their discourse, the labour of attention may not be bestowed in vain. Let the guide, then, tell his tale.

In the general progress towards new political conditions which was common to the countries of Europe at the beginning of the sixteenth century one kingdom was especially distinguished by the rapidity of its advance. That kingdom was France, as a Venetian ambassador perceived, when he surveyed the world around him with the keen vision of the trained observer. He was ready to allow that there might be lands surpassing France in fertility and wealth, and realms superior in extent and power; but nowhere, so he maintained, could a country be found in which unity had been so completely achieved. He was justified in his opinion, for it was true that France had advanced with resolute steps along the path of development which was issuing in the creation of the modern State, and in her progress lay the secret of her strength. Her unity had been created by a twofold process, springing as it did in part from the development of her political institutions and in part from the growth of territorial consolidation. These movements had proceeded

side by side, and each had been deeply affected by the other; but in spite of their interaction it will be convenient to study them separately, for it is desirable to know how the kingdom had come to be what it was before we inquire into the manner in which it was governed.

The story of the territorial unification of France is a tale of interwoven threads. In following one of them, we watch the process by which the boundaries of the kingdom were settled, that is to say, the delimitation of the territory technically subject to the rule of the King; and in following another we trace the growth of the Royal demesne, that is to say, the extension of the area fully subject in practice to the King's authority. At the accession of Hugh Capet in the year 987 the kingdom had been confined within the limits which had been assigned to it by the treaty of Verdun a century and a half before, and those limits did not by any means coincide with the limits of the France of later days. Lorraine had then belonged to the Empire, and in that region France had reached only at some points to the banks of the Meuse. Farther to the south, where the Free County of Burgundy and the kingdom of Arles had not belonged to her, she had owned nothing beyond the Saône, and had not even possessed the whole of the country on her own side of the Rhône. Elsewhere also, and in particular in the Pyrenean region, she had been restricted by the existence of independent principalities. Whilst the kingdom was thus comparatively small, the Royal demesne was very much smaller still. At Hugh Capet's accession the kingdom comprised seven great fiefs, namely the duchies of France, Normandy, and Burgundy and the counties of Flanders and Champagne in the north, and in the south the duchy of Aquitaine and the county of Toulouse. One of these, the duchy of France, belonged to Hugh Capet; but it was not the largest or the richest; and whilst he was technically the overlord of the whole fief, he did not in fact enjoy full ownership of any considerable part of it. The estates which he owned, and which upon his accession became therefore the nucleus of the Royal demesne, consisted of five properties or groups of lands: the counties of Orleans and Étampes formed the principal group; and after them came a district on the right bank of the Oise, including Senlis and Com-

piègne; a district on the left bank of the Seine, including Poissy and Montfort; the town of Montreuil-sur-Mer on the Flanders border; and Attigny on the Aisne near the boundary of the kingdom. In the midst of the prevailing anarchy which marked the heyday of the feudal régime his authority within his duchy depended upon his power to enforce his will upon turbulent and pugnacious vassals; that power in turn depended upon the strength which he derived from his demesne; and since the one was inadequate, the other was so ineffective that he could not even secure the roads which linked his estates together. Orleans was his capital, if so grandiose a title may be applied to the head-quarters of so feeble a ruler, for in Paris his position was peculiar and uncertain. He did, indeed, own a palace there, but he was not the immediate suzerain of the city and its environs; and since the city was then confined to an island site, and the bridges which gave connexion with the mainland were commanded by a couple of fortresses, the Grand and the Petit Châtelet, it rested with the lords who owned those fortresses to shut him out or to shut him in.

Beyond the borders of his own duchy he became by virtue of his election to the throne the successor of the Carolingian sovereigns and the heir to such authority as was still inherent in the Crown. In the feeble hands of his immediate predecessors that authority had grown shadowy and unreal, but despite the curtailment of its powers and the decline in its prestige the Crown still availed to invest its owner with peculiar attributes of great potential value. Alone among the great feudatories he acknowledged no overlord, holding his duchy, as he held his crown, direct of God. Alone among them he possessed the quasi-sacerdotal character conferred upon him by the consecration which he alone received. To him alone as King did it fall to defend the Church, to safeguard the realm, to dispense justice to all, and to succour the feeble and oppressed. As defender of the Church, he enjoyed regalian rights which almost converted the great ecclesiastical estates into an adjunct of his demesne. As King, he was not only the general suzerain and the keystone of the feudal arch, but he was also the possessor of a power anterior to, and independent of, the feudal polity. By virtue of his feudal suzerainty he could call upon his vassals for the

aid in counsel and in war which they owed through their liability for *service de cour* and *service de l'ost*; and the fact that these vassals were deemed to hold their fiefs of him implied a possibility that their lands might fall into his hands by reversion or escheat. By virtue of his extra-feudal position he was a sovereign as well as a suzerain; the inhabitants of the realm, though not all his vassals, were all his subjects; and although in practice his word was little regarded beyond the borders of his small demesne, yet in theory he might legislate for, and require obedience from, the entire kingdom. The Crown thus brought to the first Capetian sovereign a moral strength which formed a useful complement to the material power that was based upon his landed possessions in the heart of the kingdom; and when feudalism should grow intolerable by its anarchy and oppression, the sufferers, who would be many, would know that in the King alone might be reposed a hope for the betterment of their political and social state. Little as they suspected what they were about, the great feudatories who consented to the election of Hugh Capet sowed a seed of extraordinary power. Small, like the mustard-seed of the Scriptures, it would yet grow into a mighty tree, till the whole realm would be covered by the shadow of its branches.

In the first century of Capetian rule there was little to indicate how things would eventually turn out, for the first sovereigns of the House could do no more than defend their throne against Carolingian claimants and struggle to preserve some semblance of authority in a duchy where unruly barons ravaged the country, robbed travellers, and impeded communications between the Royal towns. Yet even this period was not wholly barren of results, Melun, Sens, and Dreux being acquired by the Crown in the beginning of the eleventh century, and the Gâtinais, the Vexin, Corbie, and Bourges being added towards its close. Then came the reign of Louis le Gros, who paved the way for the forward policy of later kings. Brave, enterprising, and resourceful, Louis reduced the unruly barons in the duchies of France and Aquitaine, summoned his vassals to attend his court of justice and to support him in enforcing its decrees, and in his relations with the towns laid the foundations of a fruitful alliance between Crown and Commons. Though Louis

did something in the way of extending and consolidating the demesne, it is not for the extent of his acquisitions that his reign is memorable, and in the matter of territorial gains it seemed that his record would be altogether eclipsed by his son, when that son married Eleanor, heiress of Guyenne and Gascony, whose possessions constituted the largest of all the feudal principalities, and whose marriage seemed destined to establish the authority of the Crown in the great provinces which formed her heritage. Never was a hope more delusive, however; for after being dashed by Eleanor's divorce in 1152, it was irretrievably shattered by her subsequent marriage with Henry Plantagenet, which vested all her fiefs in the most powerful and the most dangerous of the great feudatories. Already the owner of Normandy and Anjou and the suzerain of Brittany, Henry after his marriage controlled a third of France, including the whole Channel and Atlantic seaboard from Picardy to Bayonne; and in 1154 this overmighty vassal succeeded to the English throne.

This was the situation with which Philip Augustus was confronted upon his accession in 1180, and fortunately for itself the Crown found in this sovereign a champion undaunted by its perils. Setting himself to follow in his grandfather's footsteps and to repair his father's fault, he achieved a remarkable success by a happy combination of craft and courage, of policy and force. His first gain was Artois, which he got by his marriage with a niece of the Count of Flanders; and this possession he soon linked up with the rest of the demesne by the acquisition first of Amiens, Montdidier, and Santerre, and afterwards of Péronne, Valois, and Guise. There followed the outstanding event of the reign, the confiscation of his English vassal's fiefs and the addition to the demesne of Normandy and Anjou, Touraine, Poitou, and Maine. These successes facilitated other gains, and Évreux, Meulant, Dammartin, Boulogne, Clermont-en-Beauvaisis, Aumale, Alençon, Gien, Montargis, Auvergne, Issoudun, and Beaumont-sur-Oise were successively incorporated in the Royal estates. The growth of the Royal power was revealed in 1214, when Philip Augustus was attacked by a feudal coalition led by the Emperor and the King of England, for he then marched to victory over some of his enemies at Bouvines, while his son disposed of the others by another

victory in the west. This twofold triumph consolidated his position, and the share in it of the towns, upon which he had called for help, did much to strengthen the alliance between throne and people. At his death the demesne was quadrupled in size, and this great increase put the territorial strength of the Crown much above that of any vassal. The gain in moral authority was no less striking than the material progress. France had been taught that she had a master, and a loose federation of feudal principalities had been knit into a real kingdom.

In the two succeeding reigns the Crown continued to grow in moral and material strength, advancing in part by the momentum which Philip Augustus had imparted to it and in part by the exceptional respect which the personal sanctity of St. Louis won for the kingly office. The aim of St. Louis was to give the sanction of law to gains which had been made at the point of the sword, and history offers no better illustration of the truth that honesty is the best policy. With a profound longing for justice, respect for tradition, and genuine piety he combined firmness and courage and political wisdom of a high order. Thus his bargain with the English, which has often been censured as a needless restoration of the Angevin dominion in France, was in truth a prudent regularization of a situation pregnant with peril, and it may be attributed quite as much to his sense of political values as to the sensitiveness of a scrupulous conscience. Such a conscience did, indeed, induce him to exhibit an excessive generosity in carrying out the already over-generous provision which Louis VIII had made for his younger sons. In spite of these concessions, however, the demesne continued to grow beside the growing power of the Crown, and Philip Augustus himself could have done no more than establish the direct suzerainty of the Crown over Brittany and Poitou, Blois and Chartres, Sancerre and Foix, whilst adding to the demesne the duchy of Narbonne, Mâcon and Clermont, Mortain and Domfront, and paving the way for the eventual absorption of the great county of Toulouse.

The forward policy of Philip Augustus, which the scrupulous St. Louis had abandoned, was revived once more under the next two sovereigns, Philippe le Hardi and Philippe le Bel. In the former of these reigns a series of events of minor

importance extended the influence of the Crown both within the kingdom and also beyond its borders in the Imperial territory on the eastern frontier; but the chief events centred in two succession questions. The first arose on the death without issue of Alphonse of Poitiers, a brother of St. Louis, whose inheritance comprised Poitou, Aunis, Saintonge, Auvergne, and Toulouse. This inheritance was claimed by a surviving brother, but, the claim being disputed by the King, the matter went before the Parlement, whose judgment in the King's favour established the important principle that all appanages ought to revert to the Crown on a failure of issue of the appanaged Prince. The second succession question affected another of the great fiefs, since it arose on the death of the King of Navarre, who was also Count of Champagne; and this question was disposed of in a manner not less favourable to the Crown. The Count was survived by an infant daughter, Jeanne, whose dowry, when she should be of an age to marry, would therefore include her father's kingdom in the south and his great fief in the north. Her father had planned an alliance with the Royal House of England, and her mother would have liked to give the child's hand to an Aragonese Prince, who claimed Navarre. The King of France had other views, for he could not be indifferent to the destiny of a fief so important by reason both of its wealth and power and of its proximity to his own capital, and by a treaty of 1275 he secured the promise of the heiress' hand for his own heir. This heir was Philippe le Bel, and upon his accession Champagne and Brie were therefore added to the possessions of the Crown, whilst the boundary of the kingdom was extended by the transfer to the King of the suzerainty over several districts in Lorraine, which were held of the Count of Champagne, but had never been included in France. These were important gains, and the promise of a reign which opened thus auspiciously was not belied. With all the resolution and pertinacity of Philip Augustus, with none of the conscientious scruples of St. Louis, and with a relentlessness and contempt for tradition which were wholly his own, Philippe le Bel deliberately set to work to aggrandize the Crown at the expense of feudalism and of the Church. The success which he achieved was striking, and, though by no means its only fruits, the territorial

gains by which it was attested were of considerable importance. The eastern frontier, already pushed out over the Lorraine seigneuries in vassaldom to Champagne, was further extended by the establishment of the King's suzerainty over Valenciennes and over all the possessions of the Count of Bar-le-Duc on the French side of the Meuse, whilst in the south-east the kingdom was enlarged by a similar assertion of overlordship over the territory ruled by the Bishop of Viviers and over the county of Lyons, where a vague claim to Imperial dominion was finally extinguished. The suzerainty over Montpellier was also acquired by purchase from its ecclesiastical overlord, whilst contracts of *pariage* gave the Crown a footing in the episcopal counties of Cahors, Le Puy, and Mende. Flanders was compelled to cede Lille, Douai, and Orchies, and by this cession the French part of that province was incorporated in the demesne. Chartres and Beaugency were purchased from their owners; Bigorre was acquired in right of the Queen; La Marche and Angoulême were recovered by escheat; and the county of Soule, between Béarn and Navarre, was voluntarily surrendered by its seigneur. Far though he was from being a model king, Philippe le Bel may claim to occupy a high place among the founders of the French monarchy.

Philippe le Bel was followed on the throne by his three sons, Louis X, Philippe le Long, and Charles le Bel. In the short reign of Louis X there was an extension of the kingdom beyond the Rhône, when French suzerainty was established over the counties of Diois and Valentinois, with which in later days Louis XII was to purchase Borgia support. When Louis X died, leaving a daughter but no son, Navarre went to the daughter, and Champagne and Brie would have descended to her likewise, had not her rights been purchased by Philippe le Long, who thus retained possession of these important fiefs, and who also acquired Tournai and its territory from their ecclesiastical lord. During this reign a contribution was made to constitutional law in the assertion of the principle of the inalienability of the demesne, a principle which in after times the Parlement would jealously guard. But the period is chiefly memorable for the fact that, whereas in the past a male heir had never been wanting in the Royal House, now three kings died in rapid succession,

each without leaving a son, and on the death of each there was an application of the rule, destined to become famous under the name of the Salic Law, which excluded females from the succession to the throne. By the thrice-repeated application of the rule a precise law of succession was definitely established, and in later days that law was never challenged on the deaths of kings who left no son. There can be no question that the famous law exercised an enormously important effect in prolonging the rule of the Capetian House and in promoting, perhaps even in preserving, French unity and independence. If its ultimate results were beneficial, however, its immediate consequences were less favourable, for the rule, as applied by the French, was challenged by the English, and upon this challenge were based those pretensions of English kings to the French throne which were to cost France so dear. The English claimed that the true successor of Charles le Bel was their own Edward III, who was a grandson of Philippe le Bel through his mother, Isabella; and it was alleged on his behalf that, even if his mother were debarred from the succession by her sex, she yet possessed rights transmissible to a son. To this the French replied that Isabella had no rights, because under the Salic Law females were not merely debarred personally, but were entirely excluded; that she could not transmit rights which she had never possessed; and that, even if the principle of transmissibility through females were to be accepted, the claim of Edward would still be bad, because there would be nearer heirs in the issue of the daughters of Philippe le Long and Louis X. Such was the origin of a dispute which was to drench a land in blood.

I need not tell again the oft-told tale of the Hundred Years' War or dwell upon its familiar incidents—the battles of Crécy, Poitiers, and Agincourt; the captivity of one king and the madness of another; the peace of Brétigny, which established English dominion over a quarter of France, and the treaty of Troyes, which placed the French crown on the English King's head; the bitter civil strife between Burgundians and Armagnacs; the miseries of the people and the humiliation of the King; then the miraculous change wrought by the coming of Jeanne d'Arc—Orleans relieved; the King crowned; the English expelled; the kingdom reconstituted

in all its former strength. The expulsion of the English, who retained Calais alone of all their continental possessions, was a gain so great as to justify the terrible price at which it was secured, for they had been the bane of the Capetian House for more than three hundred years, and their power had been a standing menace to French unity and independence. Nor was their ejection the only gain, for the period, disastrous though it had been, had witnessed the acquisition by the Crown of the great province of Dauphiné; and although soon afterwards Lille, Douai, and Orchies had been given back to the Count of Flanders, the loss to the demesne had been counterbalanced in some measure by the subsequent acquisition of Limoges, Auxerre, and Dreux. But if the Crown had thus emerged from its long ordeal with its power and prestige maintained, or even increased, it had been shown all too clearly by the internecine strife of factions in the very crisis of the country's fate that the past had bequeathed one grave problem which awaited solution before the safety of France and of the monarchy could be deemed assured. That problem was the power of the appanaged Princes, in whom the Crown had created for itself an embarrassment as serious as that which it had overcome at the cost of so much effort in the secular struggle with seigniorial feudalism.

The appanaged Princes were the younger sons of sovereigns whom their fathers or elder brothers established in heritages carved from the Royal demesne. The system was originated by Louis VIII, the first King with territory enough to spare for such a purpose, who gave Artois to one son, Anjou and Maine to another, and Poitou and Auvergne to a third. Once established, the system was consistently applied to the great detriment of the demesne, and by no king more lavishly than by the unlucky and incompetent Jean, who appanaged all his sons with dukedoms, and in so doing founded the House of Burgundy, which was destined to become a deadly menace to the throne. On their first institution appanages were conferred with a general limitation, but a restriction was introduced by Philippe le Bel, who saw how important it was to expedite their return to the Crown and how dangerous to permit a female succession which might transfer them to foreign hands; and from his time onwards all appanages were made subject to a special law of succession,

ensuring their reversion upon a failure of direct male heirs. Moreover, as the Crown became stronger, it gave away less and less, the appanagists of later creations receiving few or none of the sovereign rights which had established their predecessors in the dangerous splendour of quasi-independence.

The appanage system has been variously judged, which is not surprising in view of its diversified effects. On the one hand, it grievously retarded the growth of the demesne, upon which the Crown was mainly dependent for its resources, and it gave rise to a second feudalism, as powerful and as dangerous to the monarchy as the first, which caused incessant trouble and brought about one formidable crisis. On the other hand, there were many ways in which the system promoted the growth of unity. The Capetian Princes took into their appanages the language, the manners, the civilization, and the political institutions and ideas of central France; in so doing, they broke down the local sentiment which might have resisted absorption; and they thus facilitated the ultimate annexation of their patrimonies by the Crown. By their wealth and position, and by the part they played in the life of the country, they helped materially to maintain the prestige of the Royal Family, and they performed a yet more valuable service in providing heirs to carry on a dynasty which would have become extinct, had it not been thus renewed. 'This renewal occurred four times: when the Valois branch replaced the direct line upon its extinction in the person of Charles le Bel; when the Valois branch, which ended with Charles VIII, was replaced by the Valois-Orleans branch on the accession of Louis XII; when that branch was replaced by another offshoot at the accession of Francis I; and, lastly, when the family of Francis, ending with his last grandson, Henri III, was succeeded by the Bourbon branch, which had been detached from the parent stem in the time of St. Louis.' Without the appanaged branches the dynasty could never have lasted as it did, and without the dynasty France would have developed on different lines. The continuity of the dynasty led to continuity of policy, and 'produced the grand spectacle of a country's growth carried on progressively and continuously for six hundred years'.¹

¹ Mignet, 'Essai sur la formation territoriale et politique de la France', in

Drawing the teeth of the appanaged nobility was the task which awaited Charles VII and his successor. The great feudal Houses which survived the Hundred Years' War were eight in number. By far the most powerful was the Ducal House of Burgundy, whose chief owned the duchy of Burgundy and the counties of Charolais, Mâcon, Auxerre, and Bar-sur-Seine in the east, the county of Ponthieu, the Somme towns, Artois, and Flanders in the north, and, beyond the borders of the kingdom, the Free County of Burgundy, together with extensive possessions in the Netherlands. Next to him in power and wealth came the Duke of Bourbon, whose possessions included the duchies of Bourbonnais and Auvergne, the county of Forez, the seigneurie of Beaujeu, Clermont-en-Beauvaisis, and Château-Chinon, and, in Imperial territory, the principality of Dombes. The House of Orleans owned Orleans and Blois, Valois, Soissons, Coucy, Beaumont-sur-Oise, and, beyond the kingdom, the county of Asti, which had come in the dower of Valentine Visconti; but this House was much impoverished by its misfortunes during the war, when its chief had spent many years a prisoner in England. The House of Anjou had split into two branches: René, titular King of Sicily, owned within the borders of France Anjou and the duchy of Bar and beyond them the county of Provence, whilst his heir governed Lorraine; and Charles of Anjou owned Maine and Guise. Another Valois Prince, the Duke of Alençon, was established in Alençon, Perche, and Beaumont-le-Vicomte. The House of Dreux, descended from Louis le Gros, ruled in Brittany. In the south were established two great feudal Houses, which did not belong to the appanaged nobility, but were almost their equals in power. One was the House of Armagnac, which owned Armagnac, Lomagne, Fezensaguet, Isle-en-Jourdain, Magnoac, Rodez, La Marche, Castres, and the duchy of Nemours. The other was led by the Count of Foix, who in addition to the independent principality of Béarn owned Foix, Marsan, Gabardan, Lautrec, Villemur, Bigorre, and Narbonne. In 1479 the wife of the Count of Foix became Queen of Navarre, and a brilliant future opened before the House; but that prospect was shattered

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when their grandson died, and by his death founded the power of the House of d'Albret.¹

Of these eight feudal Houses no less than seven were destined to disappear within the space of little more than half a century, partly through the firm policy of the Crown, and partly through the good fortune which seconded its efforts. The turbulent House of Armagnac lost its power for evil when its chief, the Duke of Nemours, perished on the scaffold, leaving his estates to be incorporated in the demesne or conferred upon loyal servants of the throne. Another act of forfeiture reduced to impotence the less dangerous, but no less treasonable, head of the House of Alençon. Of the Burgundian possessions a great part passed into the King's hands on the death of Charles the Bold, when Louis XI occupied the duchy of Burgundy, Charolais, Artois, the Cambrésis, Tournai, a part of Hainault, and the Free County of Burgundy, though the consequences of this occupation were modified by the treaty of Arras in 1482, which stipulated that Artois, Franche-Comté, and some other seigneuries should be regarded as the dowry of Margaret of Austria, grand-daughter of Charles the Bold, with a proviso for reversion, if her intended marriage with the future Charles VIII should not take place. The death of King René in 1480 brought in the duchy of Anjou, and by the will of Charles of Anjou Provence and Maine were devised to the King. As a result of these events Brittany, Orleans, Bourbon, and Foix alone survived at the death of Louis XI, and of these the first was soon secured by the marriages of the Duchess Anne and her daughter, Claude, its heiresses, whilst the Orleans appanage ceased to exist when Louis XII and his cousin, Francis I, in turn succeeded to the throne. Foix and Bourbon then alone remained, and the greatness of the House of Foix was destined to be ephemeral. Thus at the time of Francis I's accession there remained but one of all the feudal houses whose power had so gravely menaced the Crown, and the tragic downfall of that solitary survivor was to be writ large in the history of the new reign.

The suppression of the feudal Houses added enormously to the strength of the monarchy and to the security of the

¹ A. Longnon, *La Formation de l'unité française*, pp. 244-56.

kingdom, as observers were quick to see. 'To-day', wrote Machiavelli in his account of Louis XII's kingdom,¹ 'the Crown is stronger, richer, and more powerful than ever before, for the following reasons. First, it has become rich, because, when a King has had no son, his private fiefs and property have passed to the Crown; many fiefs have been acquired thus; and to-day all the best properties belong to the Crown, and not to private barons. Secondly, it has become strong, because to-day there are no longer any of those powerful and arrogant barons, such as the Dukes of Guyenne and Bourbon, who could resist or attack the King, when they pleased. Besides, neighbouring Princes were at liberty to attack the kingdom when they felt inclined, since there was always some Duke—Brittany, or Guyenne, or Burgundy, or Flanders—to throw open the door and welcome them in. . . . But to-day Brittany, Guyenne, Bourbon, and the greater part of Burgundy are utterly loyal to the Crown, and cannot be used by the King's enemies to create a diversion, so that he is strengthened and they are enfeebled. Further, at the present time the richest and most powerful lords are of the Blood Royal, and, being themselves in the line of succession to the Crown, they support it in the hope that they or their issue may some day inherit it and in the belief that rebellion or hostility would militate against their own interests.' An ambassador, who concurred in this view, added that, 'if any one were to hazard a rash resistance, he would be much more likely to enrich the Crown with his forfeited estates than to injure it by the success of his undertaking'.²

In the year 1515 the Royal demesne extended over the greater part of the kingdom as the result of the prolonged process of expansion which we have traced in its salient incidents in the course of our brief review. The kingdom itself, though not yet enriched with all the territories which it was to include in later days, had become a definite geographical unit, and its boundaries already approached its natural frontiers in the Channel, Atlantic, and Mediterranean coasts and in the ranges of the Jura, the Alps, and the Pyrenees. These frontiers had not as yet been fully attained, however, and in

¹ Machiavelli, *Le legazioni e commissarie*, ed. Passerini and Milanese, vol. iv, pp. 297-9 (abridged).

² Tommaseo, *Relations des ambassadeurs vénitiens*, vol. i, p. 276.

more than one region there were notable gaps. Calais and the Pale were still in the hands of the English, to whom Tournai also had been surrendered by Louis XII. Flanders and Artois had been given up to the heirs of Charles the Bold under the treaty of Senlis, signed by Charles VIII in 1493, though the Crown had retained its suzerainty, and had also contrived that of the districts which ought to have been returned as part of the dower of Charles VIII's rejected bride France should keep Arras, Mâcon, Auxerre, Bar-sur-Seine, and the county of Boulogne, once part of Artois, but separated from it in the time of Louis XI. No reservation or exception mitigated the severity of the sacrifice which the same treaty had imposed upon France in the surrender of the Free County of Burgundy, which had thus resumed its status as an Imperial fief; and beyond Franche-Comté the principality of Montbéliard owned no allegiance to France. To the north of Franche-Comté there had been but small progress, and apart from its suzerainty over the fiefs held of Champagne the Crown had no footing in the Alsace-Lorraine region, where Metz, Toul, and Verdun had not been occupied, and where Sedan was an independent fief. To the south of Franche-Comté the principality of Dombes, which belonged to the House of Bourbon, was independent of the Crown, as were the Savoyard territories of Bresse, Bugey, Valromey, and Gex, and farther down the valley of the Rhône, Avignon and the Comtat-Venaissin belonged to the Pope, whilst a feudal lord ruled in the principality of Orange. On the Pyrenean frontier the biggest gaps were caused by the Spanish possession of Roussillon and Cerdagne, which had been ceded by Charles VIII in 1493, and by the independence of Béarn and Navarre, which were not to come in till the accession of Henri IV.

When Franche-Comté, Avignon, Roussillon, Calais, and Tournai were in foreign hands, when independent seigneurs ruled in Béarn and Navarre, in Sedan, Dombes, Montbéliard, and Orange, when Flanders and Artois were united to the kingdom by an unsubstantial bond, and when in the whole north-eastern district an artificial frontier fell far short of the natural boundaries, it could not be said that the growth of territorial unity was by any means complete. Nor could it be said of a country in which provinces were

held asunder by diversity of privilege and by the strength of local sentiment, and classes were divided by conflicting interests and acute sectional differences, that political homogeneity had been attained within the limits within which territorial unity had been achieved. Notwithstanding these blemishes, however, the kingdom over which Francis I was called to rule had become a compact State, as superior in cohesion as it was inferior in extent to the far-flung empire of his rival, Charles V.

It would be interesting to know the size of the population which inhabited this kingdom, and to compare France in that particular with the other leading European States; but unhappily, when we turn from the story of territorial consolidation in France to the subject of her population, we pass from the realm of ascertainable fact to a region of hypothesis and conjecture. Estimates have, indeed, been made, and these we must presently examine for what they are worth; but it must be confessed that that worth is small, since it is unfortunately true, as Dr. Johnson remarked, that 'to count is a modern practice, the ancient method was to guess'. Not only was no census ever attempted in medieval France, but no vital statistics of any sort were collected until the edict of Villers-Cotterets in 1539, and those then attempted were not of a nature to provide adequate material for a scientific investigation. The favourite basis of calculation with writers who have interested themselves in the subject is the return of 'feux' or hearths, but this return was compiled for fiscal ends, and its value for demographic purposes is very questionable. It is doubtful what is meant by the term 'feu': did it apply to a composite household or to a single family, to an entire dwelling or to a single room, or did it possess some special technical significance, and refer to an arbitrary fiscal unit?¹ It is doubtful what 'feux' were included in the returns: was it the practice to confine the list to tax-payers, or did it

¹ 'Au xiv^e siècle . . . un feu, dans le midi comme dans le Nord du royaume, s'entendait encore d'un groupe de personnes formant un seul ménage, autour d'un foyer commun. C'était une famille, dont les aliments cuisaient dans cet âtre unique: son chef payait un impôt appelé *fouage* et dont procédera la taille. Au xv^e siècle, entre 1404 et 1435, ces *feux réels*, ces *feux allumants*, ces *feux vifs* étaient, dans le Languedoc, peu à peu devenus des *feux fictifs* et ne correspondaient plus qu'à des unités fiscales, plus ou moins

also include those persons at the two ends of the social scale, the privileged classes and the paupers, by whom no taxes were paid? What is the relation in any given case between the area for which a return is available and the entirety of the kingdom? What on the average is the correct figure to allow for the number of persons in a 'feu'? If the answers to these questions be doubtful, the comparative worthlessness of this particular class of statistics becomes apparent. Yet there are few others, and all that can be done is to consider them in the light of observed tendencies, and to draw tentative inferences from established facts of demographic significance.

It would probably be true to say of medieval France that in normal conditions a fairly even balance was maintained between the forces which tended to accelerate the growth of population and those which tended to arrest it. Chief among the causes operative in the direction of an increase were the early age at which marriage was entered into and its extraordinary fecundity: few families contained less than five or six children; many contained eight or ten; those which contained fourteen or fifteen were not remarkable; and families of thirty children were not unknown. Economic, social, and moral conditions alike conspired to favour the fertility which was natural to a virile race. Artificial limitation was unknown, and prudential considerations did not as yet provide a check: indeed, in the peasant class, which could obtain plenty of land on advantageous terms, the rearing of a large family was the best way to ensure the provision of a cheap labour force. In the better-circumstanced classes, in which her sphere was purely domestic, the wife was equally disposed to regard annual childbed as a normal incident of married life; it did not occur to her to object; and, had it done so, she would not have been able to reconcile it with her conscience to question the ways of Providence. Nor would much attention have been paid to her reluctance, had she arbitraires, et désormais sans rapport véritable avec la population. . . . Dans le Centre et le Nord du royaume, la relation originaire entre la population et le feu n'avait pas été aussi complètement abolie. Seulement le nombre d'habitants formant un *feu imposable* ou *contributif* variait suivant les "pays" et les moments': Dupont-Ferrier, *Études sur les institutions financières de la France à la fin du moyen âge*, vol. i, p. 11. Compare M. Ferdinand Lot's article in the *Bibliothèque de l'École des Chartes*, 1929.

felt it, for she was little considered by a partner in whose eyes she existed primarily to gratify passion and to provide progeny. Were she to die, her husband would speedily replace her, and, if the fates were cruel, he would not hesitate to contract a third or even a fourth union. In these conditions a high birth-rate was assured, without allowing for the fact that an appreciable influence upon population was also exerted by the prevalence of illegitimacy, chastity being a virtue not much practised by either sex or in any class, and public opinion readily tolerating a state of affairs in which numerous bastards were brought up on an almost equal footing with children born in wedlock.

The influence of a high birth-rate was, however, neutralized by many circumstances adverse to the growth of population. Hygiene was little understood; sanitary conditions were deplorable; and medical science was rudimentary. A very high death-rate both among children and among adults was the natural consequence of these unfavourable conditions. Childbirth was a perilous affair, when medical attention was inefficient and might be unprocurable, and when much or all was left to the ministrations of untrained and incompetent midwives. Infant mortality was exceedingly high, perhaps in part because infants were not of much account; in the lower classes they were left as far as possible to fend for themselves, and in families in easier circumstances they were abandoned to the mercies of ignorant nurses. Some allowance must also be made for the pernicious effects of frequent childbirth, which impaired the strength of the mother and correspondingly reduced the disease-resisting capacity of her offspring. The lack of intelligent care, common to all classes, opened the door to diseases with which the medical science of the age was unable to cope, and many victims were claimed by infectious fevers, dysentery, small-pox, and the batch of childish ailments known collectively as '*la picotte*'. In families of fourteen or fifteen children it was common for nine or ten to die in infancy, and instances where one or two only survived out of ten or a dozen were not uncommon. Contemporary opinion was disposed to see in the early deaths of the four children born to Charles VIII and Anne of Brittany a divine judgement on a union which was thought to be irregular, but as a matter of fact the rate of mortality was not so

unusual as to require a supernatural explanation, and from that time till the eighteenth century about one-half of the children born into the Royal nurseries did not live to leave them. In the less exalted, but comfortably circumstanced, family of a Norman magistrate thirty-three births were recorded in the family commonplace book as the contribution of four generations to the continuance of the stock, and yet within a comparatively brief period the family was on the verge of extinction. When these things happened in the nurseries of the well-to-do, there could be small hope for most of the children in the homes of the poor.

Those who escaped the perils of childhood grew up to face dangers as numerous and as formidable in adult life. It is a matter of common knowledge that the plague was for centuries the terror of Europe. Its ravages were incessant; every year many thousands were struck down, and in periods of great epidemics the population was decimated. The horrors of plague were frequently followed by those of famine, for when many died and the others fled, there was no one left to till the land, and then there was no corn. Even apart from the plague there was often a lack of corn after a bad harvest, for agricultural processes were rudimentary, and a bad season was a severe calamity. The seriousness of a dearth was much aggravated by the lack of trading facilities between different countries and even between the different provinces of the same country, every region living in deadly fear of dearth, and prohibiting the export of corn at the least hint of a possible shortage. The consequence was that each district was dependent upon its own supplies, and it was by no means impossible that its inhabitants should be left to perish of hunger within reach of plenty.

By the side of disease and famine war takes its place among the influences inimical to an increase of population, and in medieval France war was an evil of occurrence almost as frequent as that of the endemic plague. It is believed that more than fifty thousand Frenchmen fell in the three great battles of the Hundred Years' War, and that thousands of non-combatants perished of cold or hunger during sieges or by reason of the ravaging of their districts or through the violence of marauding troops. An authority on the subject has declared that the cost in human life of battles, sieges,

civil strife, local risings, naval combats, and maritime disasters is comparable with the toll taken by the pestilence. It may at least be asserted with confidence that war was extremely costly in human life both directly and in its indirect results.

It is generally agreed that the population of France was never greater during the medieval period than in the first half of the fourteenth century, when the taxation-lists gave a return of nearly two and a half million 'hearths' for an area which did not include Brittany, Orleans, Chartres, Alençon, Rouen, Flanders, Béarn, or some smaller districts. As I have already remarked, the numerical significance of the 'hearth' is doubtful, but it is generally assumed that it ought to be reckoned on the average certainly at not less than four, and probably at as many as five, persons, allowance being made for the fiscally exempt sections of the population, which were excluded from the returns. On this basis the population of the region covered by the enumeration of 1328 amounted to not less than ten, and probably to rather over twelve, millions, whilst a further two millions must be allowed for the districts not comprised in the enumeration, and another million added for Dauphiné, Provence, and Lyons, which did not at that date form part of the kingdom. This total may be regarded as the high-water mark for the medieval period, for not long afterwards a retrograde movement set in, which soon assumed serious proportions under the combined influences of the Black Death and the Hundred Years' War, and all the available evidence tends to show that by the middle of the fifteenth century the population was appreciably smaller than it had been a century before. The toll levied by the Black Death was very heavy, especially in the south, where it was believed to have wiped out not less than a fifth, and perhaps as much as a fourth or even a third, of the inhabitants; 30,000 people were said to have died in Narbonne alone in a single year; nor was the visitation much less severe in the rest of the kingdom, where the epidemic raged for eighteen months, and then recurred for a still longer period not long afterwards. The desolation begun by this catastrophe was completed by the long agony of the Hundred Years' War, and, if contemporary evidence is to be credited, the upshot was that large tracts of a land

once prosperous and populous were turned into deserted wastes. Thus a chronicler of Charles VII's time tells us that the country was ruined, depopulated, and deserted, and had become a tangle of wood and thicket, more fit to be a lair for beasts than the home of men. The picture is sombre, but it would seem that the colours are not too dark. In the year 1428 Coutances and its environs had lost half their population; three persons lived in a place on the Breton border, which had once possessed eighty inhabitants; and at Pont-orson in 1433 there was no one left but a few soldiers. In the English and Burgundian wars seventeen hundred dwellings were burned round Abbeville, and in the districts around Beauvais, around Amiens, and in Champagne the whole country-side had been ravaged and the people massacred. In 1459 the Estates of Languedoc painted a gloomy picture of the sterility of their province, ruined so effectually by pillage and plague that a third of the people had died and another third were on the verge of starvation. In Burgundy at the same period it was asserted that one-half of the population was reduced to mendicancy. When Louis XI went to Bordeaux in 1461, he found a pitiable state of desolation: the country-side was almost deserted; there were no plants in the vineyards; there were no ships in the port; and the city itself, once so wealthy and prosperous, was full of empty houses, which the owners had abandoned. In Normandy the ruridecanal returns of the diocese of Rouen contain convincing proof of an immense reduction in the population: a region which had been inhabited by 15,000 persons in the thirteenth century could muster less than 6,000 inhabitants in the fifteenth; the parishioners of a dozen parishes, once reckoned at nearly a thousand, were reduced to 246; and other districts, which had formerly contained seven or eight thousand souls, could show totals of no more than two or three thousand in the year 1470. In all the region between Dieppe and Rouen there was no trace of a road in 1484; all the farms had been destroyed; and none but brigands were to be met with throughout all the country-side. The towns had suffered less severely than the open country, but even in the urban areas conditions were serious enough, and there, too, the population had greatly declined. Paris was much reduced in the time of Charles VII; the public

markets were disused and in ruins; thousands of houses were unoccupied, and had fallen so far into disrepair as to constitute a public danger; thousands of persons had died of plague; and wolves swarmed in close proximity to the city in the forest of Vincennes and in the Bois de Boulogne. Toulouse had lost half its inhabitants; a few hundred people lived in Saint-Gilles, which had once had a population of 10,000. In 1451 the spokesman of the great city of Rheims represented to the King the misery of the town, the want which was constraining its people to sell their furniture and clothes to provide money for taxes, and 'the mortality which in twelve years has diminished the population by one half'. At the end of Charles VII's reign Bayonne was desolate, its inhabitants being indigent and its buildings ruinous; Tours had lost most of its population; at Angoulême, where food was scarcely obtainable, the population had been reduced by more than a half; thirty looms were operated in Provins, which had once found employment for three thousand; an industry at Troyes, which had occupied five hundred workmen, could not support a dozen; Villefranche de Périgord had been destroyed and was uninhabited; Tournai was in a critical condition. In many places the distress was every whit as acute during the next reign. At Montdidier in Louis XI's time the distress was so great that an offer was made to surrender the town's charter, because the people were unable to pay the necessary dues; ruined by the wars, the town was decayed and empty, and less than fifty 'hearths' were numbered in its suburbs, which had once contained six or seven hundred. At Troyes the population had diminished by five thousand. Rheims was 'emptied of half its population', and of the survivors a fifth were indigent: the taxable hearths, which had numbered 2,000 in 1416, were reduced to 1,000 in the second half of the century. Rouen was 'depressed and dispeopled', and its trade had been destroyed. In Lyons the people were dying of hunger and misery, and a bankrupt municipality was unable to give relief. In Quercy, where the depopulation had assumed especially serious dimensions, Cahors had lost half its inhabitants, and other towns had suffered yet more severely. The visitor to Châteaufort in 1482 could find no more than six buildings fit to be called houses, crumbling foundations alone remaining to show him

where the others had once stood. In Saint-Omer more than two thousand houses were unoccupied and ruinous, and many others were apparently doomed to the same fate. In the closing years of the reign, said a contemporary, one hundred thousand persons perished of hunger, and one hundred thousand more died of plague. 'Millions of men disappeared during the period which preceded modern times', says a recent writer;¹ 'Languedoc lost a third of its inhabitants; the provinces to the north of the Loire, such as wealthy Normandy, suffered still more.' Well might the States-General of Tours declare that the kingdom was like a body drained of its life-blood.

The tide turned again during the second half of the fifteenth century, and flowed strongly during the greater part of the reigns of Charles VIII and Louis XII. Even in Louis XI's time population showed a tendency to recover in districts which escaped the worst effects of war and taxation, for Louis XI, though he taxed his people heavily, was in other respects an active and intelligent promoter of their economic interests. In the reigns of his son and his son-in-law the conditions were almost wholly favourable to an increase of population. Though wars were not infrequent, they were fought for the most part on foreign soil; their cost in human life was not considerable; and of that cost the chief portion was paid by foreign mercenary troops. Nor were the economic consequences of these wars such as to affect the growth of population, for they were waged largely at the foreigner's expense, and taxation was never heavy except during the brief period of disaster at the end of Louis XII's reign. Industry and commerce prospered; agriculture flourished; waste and uncultivated lands were everywhere reclaimed; and the peasant, who could obtain land on favourable terms, and was assured of a market for his produce, welcomed the births of children who would one day swell his labour force. Moreover, the period was one of continuous immigration, and the influx of aliens materially accelerated the rate at which the population increased. The foreigner was welcomed alike by the monarch, who wanted men for his armies, builders and artists for his palaces, and scholars for his Court, and by a people which wanted finan-

¹ Boissonnade, *Le Socialisme d'État*, p. 10.

ciers, merchants, mechanics, miners, and artisans to manage its finances, direct its trade, and develop its industry. In these conditions old restrictions which had hampered the alien were removed, and many new privileges which encouraged his settlement were granted. Throughout the south he was enabled to live and work with the assurance that the fruits of his labour would not be snatched from his heirs under the *droit d'aubaine*, and in the north similar rights were conferred on privileged nationalities by treaties or letters patent of Charles VIII and Louis XII. The result was a steady stream of immigration, which brought into the country men of all nationalities and all classes. Montpellier was rebuilt by immigrants from Spain; Italians repopled Provence; Nantes and Rouen had Spanish quarters; and in Toulouse a considerable Spanish colony enjoyed exemption from civic dues. Members of all the European races found their way in large numbers to Paris, and most of the languages of Christendom might be heard in the streets of Lyons.

That the population was increasing rapidly under these auspicious influences may be incapable of scientific proof, but is not open to reasonable doubt. A well-informed and observant writer of the middle of the sixteenth century, who was interested in economic conditions, declared that there had been an incalculable growth of the population in the kingdom since the end of the English wars. That the process was well advanced in Louis XII's time is attested by Claude de Seyssel, who in his panegyric of that monarch averred that the number of the people could not be estimated, but was incomparably greater than ever before. There had been increases, he said, in all classes—among the nobles, among the *bourgeois*, and among the peasants, artisans, and common folk. Towns once half deserted were so full of houses that no space was left for the erection of new buildings, and many of these towns were encircled by suburbs nearly as populous as the towns themselves. The growth of population was evidenced as much by the progress of agriculture as by the increase of building; in thirty years a third of the kingdom had been brought under cultivation, and great districts, once wooded or waste, had been made productive and were full of villages and farms.¹ Particular facts

¹ Seyssel, *Histoire singulière du Roy Loïs*, edit. of 1558, pp. 59–60.

are known to us, which corroborate Seyssel's general conclusions. A place which had one hundred inhabitants in 1467 had three hundred in 1503; in another, where in the former year a solitary resident alone survived, there was a population of 260 some half a century later; in a third a population of under two hundred grew to over a thousand; in a fourth there was an increase of over fifty per cent. between the last years of Louis XI and the first years of Louis XII; and elsewhere there is evidence of rapid growth between the middle of the fifteenth century and the middle of the sixteenth.¹ In many parishes in Louis XII's time it became necessary for a church, which could no longer accommodate the people, to be enlarged or rebuilt; and at Amiens, so it was said, the people who failed to gain admission to church were more numerous than the congregation within. At Lyons, according to the testimony of the Procurator, the population had increased by a half. At Tours the town was so full that lodgings were difficult to procure. Paris, in Louis XII's own phrase, was 'peopled by such an infinite number of folk that it is a thing scarcely to be conceived'; and so acute did the housing problem presently become, that Francis I was obliged to reopen one of a pair of walled-up gates, to permit of the development of an empty space beyond the walls, which thereupon began to undergo its metamorphosis into the Faubourg Saint-Germain. A Venetian ambassador declared that, if you were to look at all the provisions which entered the city daily, you would wonder whether three towns would manage to consume them, whereas, if you were to think of the size of the population, you would wonder how so great a multitude could ever be fed. He had been told, the ambassador added, that the capital was peopled by 700,000 souls, but he himself preferred a more moderate estimate, and supposed that the inhabitants numbered three or four hundred thousand.²

So far as I am aware, no attempt has ever been made to estimate the population at the time of Francis I's accession, but there are some rather conjectural figures for earlier and

¹ Bezard, *La Vie rurale dans le sud de la région parisienne*, p. 202; Boutiot, *Histoire de la ville de Troyes*, vol. iii, p. 231.

² M. Poëte, *Une Vie de cité. Paris*, vol. ii, p. 147; Tommaseo, *Relations des ambassadeurs vénitiens sur les affaires de la France au XIV^e siècle*, vol. i, pp. 30-3; Imbart de la Tour, *Les Origines de la Réforme*, vol. i, pp. 285-6.

later periods. These give totals of about fourteen millions for the early years of the fourteenth century and sixteen millions for the end of the sixteenth century. Assuming their approximate accuracy, it would be reasonable to infer that in 1515, when much of the loss of the lean years had been made good, the total may have stood at about fifteen millions. In that case France was one of the most populous countries of Europe, for it is doubtful whether such a figure could be equalled in Germany, and certain that it was not distantly approached either in Spain, which would seem to have had a population of six or seven millions, or in England, where in all probability the population was much smaller still.¹ All these figures are admittedly dubious, but however dubious they may be, there emerges from our inquiry a conclusion not without its importance for a proper comprehension of the statecraft of the period. There can be no question that France was a country of great natural wealth, in which agriculture, industry, and commerce alike flourished; it cannot be doubted that she had outstripped all her rivals in her progress towards territorial and political unity, offering to her rulers unquestioning obedience, a handsome revenue, and the control of a military machine without an equal in Christendom; and if, in addition, her resources in man-power were as formidable as was believed, she would naturally excite a lively apprehension in the minds of statesmen responsible for the destinies of neighbouring and rival states.

¹ J. Beloch, 'Die Bevölkerung Europas', in *Zeitschrift für Sozialwissenschaft*, vol. iii, pp. 420, 769-75, 783-4. An estimate of 15 or 16 millions coincides with the computations of the Venetian ambassadors in the second half of the sixteenth century: see Tommaseo, *Relations des ambassadeurs vénitiens*, vol. ii, p. 148, and Alberi, *Le relazioni degli ambasciatori veneti*, Series I, vol. iv, p. 410. I am glad to find that the conclusions to which my own inquiry has brought me have also been reached by M. J. Calmette in a number of the *Revue historique* (vol. clxix, 1932, p. 185) published since my chapter was written: 'Mortalité effroyable de la peste noire et des épidémies qui, presque sans interruption, l'ont suivie et, pour la France, pays le plus dense de l'Occident, conséquences de la guerre de Cent ans, des ravages des compagnies, de l'atroce et longue crise économique. Si l'on avait des statistiques jalonnant la période, elles accuseraient à coup sûr d'énormes reculs entre 1350 et 1450, et ensuite un progrès qui n'a dû ramener les chiffres de 1328 qu'aux environs de 1500 tout au plus.'

XXX

POLITICAL CONDITIONS

THE SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT—COUNCILS, EXECUTIVE OFFICERS, LOCAL ADMINISTRATION

To understand any epoch in a country's history, more especially such epochs as are periods of transition in all branches of the national life, it is necessary to have some acquaintance with political, administrative, judicial, and financial institutions, or, in other words, to know how the country was governed. The possession of such knowledge is the more necessary in the case of Francis I's kingdom in that the system of government was one of considerable complexity, as may be inferred from a mere catalogue of its component parts. At its head was the King's Council, composed of various sections—the Conseil Privé, a large body, which in theory had inherited the supreme functions of the primitive *Cour du Roi*, but in fact was dwindling to the level of an administrative body without importance; the Conseil Secret, Étroit, or des Affaires, a small body, which governed; the Grand Conseil, or Judicial Committee; and the Conseil des Finances, which, as its name implies, dealt with financial business. Under the Council were the Chancellor, the Constable, and other Great Officers of State; the Governors, ten or eleven in number, who represented the King in the provinces; and the *Baillis*, Seneschals, *Prévôts*, *Viguiers*, and *Bayles*, nearly a thousand strong, by whom local government was carried on in the King's name. The Parlement of Paris and six provincial Parlements acted as the supreme courts of the kingdom, and under them justice was administered in humbler forms by a hierarchy of tribunals, which included various special jurisdictions, the courts of the *bailliages* and *prévôtés*, and the machinery by which feudalism and the Church exercised the relics of their judicial authority. Four Chambres des Comptes and three Cours des Aides controlled the fiscal administration and exercised an appellate jurisdiction in revenue cases; and under them the Generals of Finance and Treasurers of France and a multitude of *Élus*, receivers, comptrollers, and salt-monopoly officials dealt with

the assessment and collection of taxation and with questions arising therefrom. The *Chambre des Monnaies* and various local mints dealt with the currency and with currency matters. The organization known as the *Eaux et Forêts*, with its central bureau, its districts, and its sub-districts, was responsible for a special branch of demesne administration. Lastly, exceptional tribunals, such as the Court of Requests of the Hôtel and the *Tables de Marbre* of Paris and Rouen, occupied places apart in the administrative, judicial, and fiscal systems.¹

The Council, as it existed in the beginning of the sixteenth century, had been evolved from the feudal Court which had advised the sovereign in the early days of the Capetian monarchy. In common with other feudal rulers, but in a more marked degree, the first Capetian Kings had suffered from the inherent defects of a system in which everything was occasional and accidental;² they were without an organized administration, a regular revenue, a permanent army, established tribunals, or any of the usual means of independent action and effective control. For material power they had to look to their demesne; its rents and profits formed their revenues, the stewards who managed it were their executive, and its vassals supplied in the main the personnel of their army and composed the *Cour du Roi*, in which they must seek the rudiments of their law-courts and their Council. That was why the expansion of the demesne was for so long a first object with the monarchy, an object pursued, as we have seen, with untiring persistence through centuries of expansion by confiscation and escheat, by treaty and purchase, by gift, by marriage, and by devise. In the machinery of the demesne, adapted to a wider sphere, the King had to look for the machinery by which the kingdom might be controlled. One of its chief pieces he had found in an institution which owed its existence to the operation of the feudal principle that every vassal must assist his suzerain in court as well as in camp. The authority of this feudal Court, if somewhat vague, was always undisputed, and after the Court of the Duke had become the *Cour du Roi*, it increased in proportion

¹ Imbart de la Tour, *Origines de la Réforme*, vol. i, pp. 78-9; *Histoire de la nation française*, vol. iii, p. 562.

² The observation is Guizot's, *History of Civilization*, vol. i, pp. 76-7.

as the power of the Crown grew. Its functions were partly judicial and partly political and administrative. In the judicial sphere it exercised authority over the great feudatories, first in their relations with the Crown, and then, by a natural extension, in their relations with each other and with their sub-vassals; and from this there followed the highly important consequence that the King came to be recognized as the judge of the great feudatories, subject to the qualification that in exercising such authority over one of them he must seek the assistance of others neutral to the dispute, or, as it was termed, must furnish his court with peers. In the executive and administrative spheres the Court discharged a twofold function. Certain of its members—prelates, barons, and Household officials—formed a permanent Council, which moved about with the King, and advised him in the routine work of government and administration. The full Court, which in the nature of things could meet only at comparatively infrequent intervals, advised him in matters of special importance and in questions of general interest, and in so doing gave to his decrees a sanction which in those days of his early feebleness could alone secure their acceptance in the dominions of virtually independent lords.¹

As the authority of the Crown grew and the borders of the demesne advanced, the primitive Court or Council became increasingly unequal to the varied and onerous duties which, as the sole organ of government, it was called upon to discharge. Many of these duties, especially the exercise of judicial functions and the control of the local and fiscal administrations, required technical knowledge, and a tendency arose to split up the Court into separate sections, each entrusted with a special kind of business and strengthened by the inclusion of persons specially qualified to handle its peculiar work. Of these sections some remained integral portions of the Council, but others became wholly detached; their occasional meetings were supplanted by regular sessions, their close connexion with the King was severed, and alongside and in quasi-independence of the Council two distinct bodies came into existence, one of them the financial section, to be known as the *Chambre des Comptes*, and the other the judicial section, destined to become famous in history under

¹ Vuitry, *Études sur le régime financier de la France*, pp. 153-6.

the name of the Parlement of Paris. The transition was accompanied by a marked strengthening of the *bourgeois* element in the Royal service, for in much the same way as the judicial authority inherent in the English House of Lords has become confined to a few members possessed of technical qualifications, the feudal character of these French institutions was gradually obliterated. Unused to business, ignorant of the law, and unversed in the technicalities of finance, the nobles found themselves eclipsed by the superior aptitudes of clerks and lawyers, whom they despised; and they speedily tired of an attendance which became doubly irksome when it not only offended their pride but also detained them from the pursuits that constituted the chief interest and pleasure of their lives. Except on the rare occasions when a member of their own order was concerned, they ceased to be present at the sittings of the courts, and their fitful attendance threw both work and authority into the hands of the trained servants of the Crown. The change was made unobtrusively, and the momentous consequences to feudal society with which it was fraught were allowed to pass unnoticed.

Relieved by the evolution of the Parlement and the *Chambre des Comptes* of judicial and financial business, the *Conseil du Roi*, or Privy Council, emerged as a separate organ of government, specially occupied with political and administrative affairs. Unlike its off-sets, which had become stationary in Paris, the Council continued to be ambulatory in the suite of the King, for it must always be ready to advise him upon matters of which many were urgent, brooking no delay. Before long this body sought to review the distribution of business which tended to confine its activities within the executive sphere. No corporate body will ever willingly surrender any part of an authority which it has once possessed, and in the fact that the supremacy of the King, whom it advised, was unimpaired by his delegation of certain powers to the Parlement and the *Chambre des Comptes* the Council speedily found a basis for reasserting its own supremacy in the judicial and fiscal spheres. Circumstances conspired to favour its ambition: the intervention of the sovereign was required in the many cases of disputed jurisdiction between rival tribunals, and the King himself was eager to retain

jurisdiction in all cases in which the actions of the executive were impugned, or in which by reason of the persons involved or the matters at stake he had some special interest. Thus the Council regained the judicial and fiscal control, with the loss of which it had been threatened by the creation of the Parlement and the *Chambre des Comptes*, and eventually its judicial business became so important as to demand the special organization of the committee by which it was transacted. When this organization had been carried out under Charles VIII and Louis XII, there were once more three distinct bodies within the *Conseil du Roi*—the *Conseil Privé*, or body primarily concerned with politics, administration, and government; the *Grand Conseil*, or Judicial Committee; and the *Conseil des Finances*, which with the assistance of the higher Treasury officials framed budgets and exercised supreme control in the fiscal sphere.

Descended from the *Cour du Roi*, the *Conseil Privé* did not inherit either formal organization or regular procedure, but its sittings acquired regularity as business grew with the extending sphere of Royal influence and action, and usage presently established a code of rules. In the main the choice of Councillors rested with the King, who appointed and dismissed them at pleasure, and summoned to the Council board as many or as few as he pleased; but by a sort of survival of the rights and duties of the great feudatories the Princes of the Blood Royal and a few ecclesiastics and officers of State enjoyed a prescriptive right of attendance, and it was customary for one of these distinguished persons to preside over the Council in the absence of the King. The other Councillors were selected indifferently from all ranks in the community, and once again, as had happened in earlier days, the distaste of the *grands seigneurs* for sustained labour tended to throw authority into the hands of men whose humbler origin was counterbalanced by practical experience, technical knowledge, and assiduity of attendance. In exceptional circumstances, such as the minority or incapacity of the sovereign, the Princes might still seek to dominate the Council, as they attempted to do upon the accession of Charles VIII, but such circumstances were of infrequent occurrence, and in normal times control belonged to the new Councillors, created by the Royal will, and dependent

upon the Royal favour. The aim of these men was to ensure the supremacy of the monarch, whom they advised, and whose authority they shared. Unlike the great seigneur or the Court favourite, 'whose position, if more prominent, was more precarious',¹ they remained unaffected by the veering winds of Royal favour or the changing currents of politics; security enabled them to maintain in Government policy the continuity which constituted its strength; and it was mainly owing to their ability and pertinacity that the rudimentary mechanism of government was transformed, that monarchical institutions were perfected, and that the ideal of centralization was pertinaciously pursued. 'It was with clerks steeped in legal lore and administrative traditions, and with commoners fitted for service on the Council by practice at the Bar and experience on the Bench, that the Crown accomplished its daily task of government. These servants it would often reward with patents of nobility, and so raise a new aristocracy against the extinction of the old. Many Councillors belonged at once to the commons by their mode of life, to the Church by their tonsures, and to the nobility by the pleasure of their King.'²

Meanwhile the forces which had led to the modification of the primitive *Cour du Roi* had begun to operate once more within the new organ of government that had taken its place, and at the beginning of the sixteenth century the Conseil Privé, or general body of Royal advisers, was in process of suffering eclipse. The more complex society and government become, the stronger under any political system does the tendency grow to concentrate power in a few hands, and in the French Council a process was at work analogous to that by which in England an unwieldy Privy Council has been displaced by a small and compact Cabinet. The Conseil Privé was much too large and heterogeneous a body to suit the requirements of a Government which was beginning to acquire modern characteristics; and though it was to remain in theory the supreme consultative and executive organ of the monarchy, in practice its place was being usurped by a smaller body, which promised secrecy, efficiency, and dispatch, coupled with the continuity of policy and submissive-

¹ Valois, *Le Conseil du Roi au XIV^e, XV^e et XVI^e siècles*, pp. viii-ix.

² Viollet, *Histoire des institutions*, vol. iii, p. 390.

ness to the Royal will that the absolutist leanings of the Crown were beginning to demand. The change was made easy by the fact that the composition of the Council depended upon the pleasure of the King and upon his unquestioned power to expand or contract it at will and to honour some Councillors with his special confidence. At the beginning of Charles VIII's reign the author of an 'Estat des Offices'¹ was already able to draw a definite contrast between the 'Conseil des choses communes' and the 'Conseil des choses especiales'. The latter body he described as being 'specially concerned with divers secret matters, of which the King wishes not that many persons should have knowledge; such matters he may entrust to whomsoever, and howsoever few, he will; and none may attend this Council but such as are specially summoned'. The rise of the Conseil Secret or Étroit—or, as it was called, when placed upon a permanent basis by Francis I, the Conseil des Affaires—dealt a fatal blow to the authority of the Conseil Privé, which was deprived of all important business, and became a mere cog in the administrative machine. Henceforth it was in the Conseil des Affaires, which met in the King's chamber, and was attended only by a few of his favourites and intimate friends, that the really important interests of the kingdom were debated. It was the Conseil des Affaires, and not the Privy Council, which decided questions of peace and war; considered reports from the provinces and foreign countries; read the dispatches of French ambassadors, and drafted diplomatic instructions; received foreign envoys in audience, and determined how they should be answered; settled ecclesiastical questions, and exercised Church patronage; framed or approved budgets; and drew up the legislative programme. The preponderance acquired by the small body, which governed, over the large body, which administered, marked the passing by the Crown of another stage on the road to absolute power, for the influence which might have been exercised by a general Council of great seigneurs, State officers, and distinguished public servants was wholly lacking in an informal gathering of favourites, owing their position to the monarch's partiality. In

¹ Printed in Leber, *Collection*, vol. xix. The reasons for assigning 1480-4 as its probable date are given by Valois, *Inventaire des arrêts du Conseil d'État*, vol. i, p. xxxix, note.

Louis XI's time it was commonly said that the King's mule carried the King's Council, and none but a very feeble ruler would have allowed his advisers to suppose that they possessed an authority independent of the Crown. No such pretension would ever be advanced by the Conseil des Affaires, by origin the creation of the sovereign, and in destiny the creature of autocracy.

Another important development took place in this period, when the judicial section of the Council was organized as an independent supreme court under the name of the Grand Conseil. This organization was carried out by ordinances of 1497 and 1498, but the way for it had long been prepared.

In constitutional theory the King was the fountain of justice; although he might delegate his powers, he could not divest himself of them, nor impair the supremacy which was inherent in his office; and in this supremacy the Council shared. Despite the establishment of the Parlement of Paris as a separate judicial tribunal, the Council continued to deal with petitions of right, to settle questions of disputed jurisdiction, to act as a supreme administrative tribunal, and to serve as a channel for the distribution of judicial and quasi-judicial favours; and by degrees it acquired a regular jurisdiction. 'Sometimes the King remitted to his Council a suit actually pending before the Parlement or some other court; sometimes by anticipatory decree he assigned to it the whole of a specified class of business'.¹ Just as in earlier days the pressure and complexity of its work had led at first to specialization within the *Cour du Roi*, and then to the evolution of distinct judicial and financial tribunals, so in the fifteenth century history repeated itself in paving the way for a further dismemberment of the Council; and when Charles VIII and Louis XII issued the ordinances which set up the Grand Conseil as a separate judicial committee, they merely accorded formal legal sanction to a state of affairs which had long existed in fact. Judicial business, already considerable in the reign of Charles VII, when three days a week were devoted to it, expanded enormously in the reign of Louis XI, who was at loggerheads with the Parlement over his religious policy, and assigned to the more complaisant Council an exclusive jurisdiction in ecclesiastical

¹ Dareste, *La Justice administrative en France*, p. 54.

affairs. By the ordinances which regularized the position of the Grand Conseil as a new supreme court, the Crown fixed its composition, defined its jurisdiction, and settled its procedure; and it was provided that, instead of moving about in the suite of the King or the Chancellor, the court should henceforth sit in the Louvre.

The new tribunal was not created in response to any popular demand. Public opinion, professional and lay, had always been hostile to the Grand Conseil's pretensions, and was extremely critical of its methods. There could be no doubt that in the past the ambulatory character of the Grand Conseil had been fruitful in inconveniences to litigants, who complained bitterly that they were obliged to follow it from place to place, 'ill lodged, ill treated, in danger of their lives, in peril of losing their pleadings and documents, . . . which have to be carried about in trunks and boxes, whereby divers of them are mislaid'. It had been impossible to find out when or where the court would sit, or whether it would sit at all; 'in every town it visits . . . the parties have to brief fresh counsel, so that the advocate who opens the case is unable to conduct it to a conclusion; and from the incessant changes in the constitution of the court it often happens that the judges to whom the arguments of counsel were addressed are absent when judgement is delivered'.¹ Popular dissatisfaction was reflected in the recommendations of the States-General of 1484, which sought both to modify the composition of the Grand Conseil and to restrict its activities. Asserting that Royal officials were in the habit of sitting and giving judgement in cases which they had not heard argued, the States demanded that none should be appointed Councillors unless possessed of judicial experience and acquaintance with local usages and customary law. They also demanded the total suppression of evocations and of the entire jurisdiction of the Grand Conseil as a court of first instance. In answering this complaint, the Crown recognized that evocations were a device employed by those who knew their cases to be bad, admitted that attendance before the Grand Conseil was burdensome to suitors, and promised reform; but reform, to be effective, required a hard and fast rule, admitting no exceptions where the interests of the

¹ Valois, *Inventaire des arrêts du Conseil d'État*, vol. i, p. xxxi.

State or of great persons were involved; and as such a rule would have entailed sacrifices which the Crown was unwilling to make, the promise of reform was never fulfilled. More efficacious, because less transitory, than the hostility of the States-General was the opposition of the Parlement of Paris. Rivalry between the Parlement and the Grand Conseil had turned chiefly upon competence in suits relating to ecclesiastical benefices and upon jurisdiction in cases relating to the possession of offices under the Crown. The importance of the former class of suits lay in the fact that they nearly always raised the weighty questions of ecclesiastical policy involved in the application of the Pragmatic Sanction of Bourges; and in these suits, whilst the Parlement would consistently uphold the Pragmatic and champion the liberties of the Gallican Church, the Grand Conseil would as consistently evince hostility to the Pragmatic Sanction, and prefer the convenience of the Crown to Gallican liberties. Thus it came about that, whenever there were rival claimants to a see or other preferment, one would be supported by the Grand Conseil and the other by the Parlement. 'When the Pragmatic Sanction is in question', said the Parlement, 'the matter ought to be decided by the court in which the Pragmatic was read and published. . . . It will be found that it is always the nominee of the Roman Curia, and never the canonically elected candidate, who gets his suit evoked.' Similarly the interests of the sovereign were the deciding factor with the Grand Conseil in the other class of case relating to the possession of offices under the Crown. These causes were evoked *en bloc* to the Grand Conseil by a decree of January 1484. The Parlement at once protested, refused to register the decree, and ordered that all pending causes should be heard at its bar. Threatened with the total suppression of its jurisdiction, it stood firm in its decision. In vain the Conseil Privé pleaded for an accommodation; in vain illustrious Councillors urged moderation; the Parlement would not yield until told explicitly in the sovereign's name that the question of Government employment was one for the King and for none else. Officials, it was informed, were paid by the King, and it was for him to decide all questions about their appointment; the safety of the realm might depend upon their conduct; and questions con-

cerning them might involve secrets of State unfit for public discussion. In the end, a compromise preserved the dignity of both bodies: the cases in dispute were ordered to be referred to a commission, on which Parlement and Grand Conseil were equally represented.¹

There were several grounds upon which the creation of the Grand Conseil might have been justified, had its character been other than it was. There was room for a tribunal of unquestioned supremacy to deal with the disputes in which the co-ordinate sovereignty of the Parlements, the Chambres des Comptes, and the Cours des Aides was fertile; but since the Grand Conseil was not invested with such a supremacy, its establishment served merely to add to the din and confusion of an already overcrowded arena. There was room for a court which should administer justice with economy and dispatch; but in this respect the performance of the Grand Conseil fell far short of its promise, and the congestion of its business became rapidly so great that to obtain a transfer to its bar was a recognized device for defeating the ends of justice. There was room for a court which should relieve the Council of State of the judicial business to which much of its energy had been misdirected; but no sooner had the Grand Conseil become an independent tribunal than it began to lose the authority which the presence of the sovereign could alone confer, and the Conseil Privé began gradually to resume the judicial functions which the Grand Conseil had been created to discharge. The true reason for its creation was that it could be trusted, as the Parlement could never be, to deserve the character of 'a docile instrument in the hands of absolute Kings'.² Whatever the theories of the King's inherent judicial supremacy that might be advanced to account for its jurisdiction, that jurisdiction was founded in fact upon the susceptibility of the court to Royal influence when the interests of the King or of his favourites were at stake. So useful a weapon was not lightly to be thrown away at the bidding of an angry magistracy or the clamour of an injured people, and, despite the protests of the Judiciary and the remonstrances of the States-General, the stream of the Grand Conseil's business flowed

¹ Valois, *Inventaire des arrêts du Conseil d'État*, vol. i, pp. xxxii-xxxvi.

² Valois, *op. cit.*, p. xxxvii.

ever fuller and fuller from the showers of evocations and decrees to which Royal partiality gave rise. As the history of ecclesiastical litigation under Louis XI and Francis I only too plainly shows, the evocative system was never so relentlessly employed as when the policy of the Crown ran counter to the sympathies and convictions of the people; and the Grand Conseil, created and preserved by the Crown as a counterpoise to the Parlement, was identified with that subordination of the law to Royal caprice which constituted one of the most flagrant abuses of the despotic régime in France.

The functions of the Council were advisory only; it did not govern; and the executive power was exercised through the Great Officers of State, provincial Governors, legal and fiscal experts, and local agents, who collectively corresponded to the Ministry and the Civil Service of modern times. Like other limbs of the body politic, the executive and the administrative branches of the early sixteenth century were at an intermediate stage between the rudimentary machinery which had met the needs of the first Capetian age and the elaborate mechanism which later ages have evolved to satisfy the requirements of a more complex society. In the simple organization of the early monarchy the needs of the Crown had been sufficiently met by the stewards who managed the demesne and by the Household officers who combined with their domestic duties such public functions as pertained to the servants of a nearly impotent ruler. Attached to the person of the sovereign, dependent upon his favour, and sharing in his fortunes, the Great Officers of early days had contributed in no small measure to the steady progress of the Royal power; but simultaneously with the achievement of that advance their own growing importance had caused them to be regarded with suspicion and dislike. Alive to what had happened under the preceding dynasty, and surrounded on all sides by the harsh warnings of feudal society, the Crown had realized its peril, and had seized every chance either to abolish these over-powerful officials, or, if it retained them, to curtail their influence and power. In the achievement of these ends it had been aided by the fortunate circumstance that in France the Great Offices, which in many countries

were hereditarily attached to feudal fiefs or dignities, were merely offices of personal distinction, filled by the sovereign's nomination. Repeated attempts had, indeed, been made to invest them with an hereditary character, but such efforts the Crown had been vigilant to frustrate: the vice-regal authority of the Seneschal, the most powerful of the primitive officers, had perished when his office was suppressed by Philip Augustus; the Grand Bouteiller had been superseded by a domestic official of secondary importance; and the Grand Chambrier, supplanted by the Grand Chambellan, had been deprived of pay, position, and power. Invented as a method whereby a distasteful authority might be permanently suppressed, the creation of a subordinate office, tenable during the Royal pleasure, was also a useful expedient when it was desired to leave an office temporarily vacant or to get rid of an office-holder who suffered from incapacity or had forfeited the confidence of the sovereign. Thus it would sometimes come about that a Garde des Sceaux would be appointed to perform the Chancellor's duties, or a Lieutenant-General be substituted for the Constable in the military command-in-chief.

By Francis I's time such of the Great Officers as survived, and the substitutes of such as had been suppressed, had for the most part become mere Household officials, without political importance. The Grand Chambrier, once the custodian of the Royal treasure, wardrobe, and archives, with responsibility for the upkeep of the Palace, had not yet been utterly abolished, but at the end of the thirteenth century he had lost his powers, and since that time it had become usual for some great seigneur to enjoy the titular sinecure which alone recalled the existence of the ancient office. Its duties were in commission. The Grand Chambellan had succeeded to the charge of the Royal wardrobe, and, although he had not succeeded to the custody of the treasure, which had passed to the Treasurers, he was of some importance financially by his control over Household expenditure and by his division of responsibility for the upkeep of the Palace with the Grand Pantler, the Grand Almoner, the Grand Equerry, and other Household officials. The posts which these officials held were for the most part lucrative sinecures, which invested the holders with social prestige, but

did not confer upon them any political power. The Grand Chambellan alone derived a measure of political importance from his close personal contact with the sovereign and from the influence inseparable from that intimate association.

To the general rule that the Great Officers were without political importance the most notable exceptions were to be found in the persons of the Constable and the Chancellor, who had succeeded respectively, the one to the military functions, and the other to the judicial and administrative powers, of the Seneschal. The authority of that mighty functionary had been vice-regal: he had been Comptroller of the Household, War Minister, and Commander-in-Chief, Minister of the Interior with control of the Civil Service, and Minister of Justice with supervision of the Judiciary. Once merely the head of the Royal mews, the Constable had been raised to the highest place by the share which he had acquired in the inheritance of the defunct Seneschalship. The sword, which was the badge of his office, denoted that he was the supreme commander of the army; the King himself could neither act in the military sphere without his advice, nor exclude him from the Conseil Étroit, in which he sat by right; the Marshals were his subordinates; he enjoyed a special jurisdiction, which he exercised in the court known as the Table de Marbre; and the soldiery of the country were answerable to him for their crimes, misdemeanours, and breaches of discipline. In succeeding to so much of the power of the Seneschal, the Constable had succeeded also to a measure of the distrust with which his predecessor had been regarded by the Crown, and in the period with which we are dealing there was a marked tendency to leave the office vacant. Louis XI had dispensed with the services of a Constable after the execution of Saint-Pol, and the post which he had omitted to fill would have remained vacant throughout the whole of the next two reigns, had not Anne de Beaujeu been obliged to purchase the support of her husband's kinsman, the aged Duke of Bourbon, by permitting him to hold the coveted sword during the closing years of his life. Another member of the same Ducal House was to hold that sword from the beginning of the new reign, for an appointment to the Constableness was to be one of the first acts of Francis I; but in the rude school of experience

the lessons of the past would be learnt once more, and in an hour of deadly peril to his throne Francis would have cause to regret the impulse which had led him to bestow upon a friend and playmate an authority that could not with safety be entrusted to a subject's hands.

The Marshals, usually two in number until Francis I increased them to four, had originally been mere assistants of the Constable in the spheres of military justice and police, but they had now acquired high military rank, and shared the command of the army with the Constable and his lieutenants. Their position was one of considerable personal distinction; great honours were paid to them; they had a guard of fifty men, and the King called them 'cousin'. Swearing on admission to office that they would keep order among the Royal troops, they performed functions which were extensive, if somewhat vague. They shared with the Constable in the jurisdiction of the Table de Marbre, and were represented in the provinces by the officers who bore the dreaded title of *Prévôts des Maréchaux*. At the close of Louis XI's reign nearly every province had possessed its Marshals' Provost, and it was under that sovereign that the activities of such men as Tristan Lermite had won for the office its unenviable notoriety. That the proceedings of the *Prévôt des Maréchaux* were often arbitrary and high-handed was true enough, but his critics have not always appreciated at their true value the services which he rendered in an age when lawlessness was encouraged by the absence of other restraining agencies. The contribution of the Provost-Marshal to national security sprang largely from the fact that he was a policeman as well as a soldier, that he not only commanded the local levies and administered martial law, but also acted as the guardian of civil law and order, maintained the peace, and exercised summary jurisdiction over highwaymen, robbers, marauders, and vagabonds. If the France of Louis XII suffered less than of yore from acts of brigandage and violence, she owed it in a measure to the zeal of such men as Tristan Lermite, from whom the lawless vagabond, whether soldier or civilian, had received short shrift.

Succeeding to the Seneschal's judicial and administrative attributes, the Chancellor, once little more than a secretary or clerk, had enjoyed a great accession of dignity and

influence, and in the hands of a succession of able and ambitious men his post had become the most important office under the Crown. It was true that the Constable enjoyed a nominal precedence over him, through the theoretical superiority of military over civil offices, but 'the superiority was purely official, for in fact the Chancellor's powers were far more extensive than the Constable's, or, to put it better, there could be no comparison either between their dignities or between their duties'.¹ Combining the judicial and administrative powers of the Seneschal with those which he possessed in his own right as Keeper of the Seals and chief of the notaries, the Chancellor was the first minister of the Crown, the head of the Judiciary, the chief of the Civil Service, the head of the Universities, the source or channel of all patronage. In his judicial capacity he presided over all courts of law, was the supreme head of the Grand Conseil, the Parlements, and the Court of Requests of the Hôtel, exercised disciplinary powers over the magistracy, had authority to grant pardons and remission of sentences, and in numerous ways controlled or influenced the administration of justice. As head of the Civil Service, he issued commissions to all officials, with power to withhold or delay them at will; and claims to, and disputes about, the possession of offices were within his cognizance. As chief Minister of the Crown, he presided over the Council in the absence of the King, notwithstanding that Royal Princes might be present; and as the King's mouthpiece he addressed Estates, Parlements, and Synods in the sovereign's name. His political importance was further assured by his custody of the great seal, which not only enabled him to act on his own initiative in matters of secondary consequence, but also ensured the passage through his hands of nearly all the business of the State, with resultant opportunities to put forward his views in the shape of objection or advice. Thus associated with every act of government, and rendered independent of the King's favour by appointment for life, he was in a position to counsel, criticize, or oppose his sovereign at every turn, and to exercise an enormous influence over legislation, politics, and finance.

Powerful though he was, the Chancellor was not wholly

¹ O. Morel, *La Grande Chancellerie*, pp. 46-8.

above the law, for although of itself the Parlement, as Francis I was to remind it, could claim 'no jurisdiction or power over the Chancellor of France', yet, as the same monarch was to recall during his quarrel with Poyet, the head of the Judiciary was not exempt from the overriding jurisdiction which was inherent in the King as the fountain of justice, and by virtue of this jurisdiction the Parlement could be empowered to inquire into a Chancellor's conduct and decree that he should be deprived of office. As this was an extreme measure and of very rare occurrence, it is true to say that in the ordinary way a Chancellor could not be dismissed; and the usual plan, when he became incapable of acting or fell out of favour, was to provide a substitute by the appointment of a Garde des Sceaux. Sometimes, as in the latter part of Louis XII's reign, the Chancellorship would be left vacant, a Garde des Sceaux being alone employed. This official, as his name implies, was responsible for the custody of the seals, that is, the great and privy seals of France and the seal of Dauphiné, and he was expected to accompany them when in transit, though the great seal was then given into the care of the Chauffe-cire, a servant whose duty was to heat the wax, and on whose person the seal travelled. The Garde des Sceaux was the head of the now elaborately organized Chancelleries, with their staffs of *audientièrs*, *receveurs des droits des sceaux*, notaries, and other officials; he appointed to all posts within them, heard appeals from the decisions of subordinate officials, and, like the Chancellor, enjoyed by virtue of his duties a supervisory control over important sections of the King's public and private affairs.

The officials by whom the Great Officers were ultimately to be displaced were as yet in a position of comparative subordination, and although there were straws which showed how the wind of Royal favour was beginning to blow, their status was not so much indicative of a future which was to be brilliant as reminiscent of an origin which had been very humble. The King's Secretaries had been drawn originally from the inferior clerks of the Chancellery, a group of notaries having been attached to the King's person for the purpose of authenticating the acts that embodied his will. That the clerks of the Chancellery enjoyed a monopoly of official

papers is shown by an edict of 1482, which decreed that all laws, edicts, ordinances, charters, concessions, and grants of privilege, all acts of Chancery, all judgements, sentences, and minutes of the King in Council and of the Courts of Parlement, and generally all letters, close or patent, and all other papers touching the King or kingdom were to be drawn up, signed, and registered by them. A favoured few had set out on the road to political power when in the fourteenth century they had been detached from the general body and, under the name of *Clercs du Secret* and *Secrétaires des Finances*, had been entrusted with the duty of keeping minutes of the Council's deliberations, drafting the instructions which gave effect to its decisions, and authenticating all fiscal papers and letters containing gifts or promises of payment by the King. The day was as yet in the future when these Secretaries would be placed at the side of governors, generals, and ambassadors, to play the part of the Venetian Provveditori and 'acquaint the Government with all that might come to pass'; and still more distant was the day when as Secretaries of State they would become the chief executive instruments of the Crown; but their position was already influential, and its possibilities were revealed by the career of Florimond Robertet, who had remained a mere Secrétaire des Finances throughout the reign of Louis XII, and yet after the death of d'Amboise had succeeded him in the direction of the government.

For the purpose of local administration the country was divided into areas of three different sizes, large, medium, and small. The administrative unit was the district known in the centre and north as the *prévôté* and in the south as the *viguerie*. Next above it came the *bailliage* in the centre and north and the *sénéchaussée* in the south, each consisting of a group of *prévôtés* or *vigueries*. Finally, in some regions, but not in all, the *bailliages* or *sénéchaussées* were themselves grouped in a wider district known as a Government, which was often identical with one of the provinces or great fiefs. With another and more modern division of the country into *généralités* and *élections* we need not for the moment concern ourselves, since this classification rested upon a basis which was mainly fiscal in character. Nor need we do more

than note the fact that within the several administrative areas there were cities or communities which formed special units, and enjoyed self-government more or less after the English plan. The administrative districts varied much in size, in number, and in name. Though the main division into Governments, *bailliages*, and *prévôtés* held good in the greater part of northern and central France, and that into Governments, *sénéchaussées*, and *vigueries* obtained generally in the south, exceptions to the general rule were to be encountered, and there was a bewildering variety in local terminology. In some regions the *bailliage* was divided, not into *prévôtés*, but into *châtellenies*, with *prévôtés* as subdivisions; and in others the *châtellenie* was a subdivision of the *prévôté*. In the south the primary units usually known as *vigueries* were sometimes called *jugeries* or *bailies*, and all these names, though mainly characteristic of the south, were occasionally to be met with in other regions. In Normandy the usual division was into *vicomtés*, with *sergenteries* as sub-areas. In Dauphiné the units were called *mandements*, and in Burgundy they were known as *mairies*. With this variety in nomenclature the administrative divisions combined a no less perplexing instability in size, number, and association, being incessantly enlarged or reduced, abolished, re-created, and re-shuffled in their grouping. By the beginning of the sixteenth century the primary areas—*prévôtés*, *vigueries*, and so forth—had become very numerous. The *bailliages* and *sénéchaussées* were at that time about one hundred in number. These varied greatly in size, some consisting of no more than two or three *prévôtés*, others being composed of nine or ten, and a few containing as many as eighteen. A similar lack of uniformity characterized the larger districts known as Governments. In the period with which we are dealing there were usually eleven—Guyenne, Languedoc, Provence, Dauphiné, Lyonnais, Burgundy, Champagne, Picardy, Normandy, Brittany, and the Île-de-France; but no number was definitely fixed. Still more variable was their composition, the transfer of districts from one to another being of common occurrence, and confusion becoming worse confounded through the prevalent practice of entrusting neighbouring Governments to the same hands. Five times within a century Guyenne and Languedoc were united under one

Governor; in Louis XI's time Champagne was more than once held in conjunction with Burgundy, as was Dauphiné with Guyenne; and the Île-de-France, which had been united with Normandy under Charles VIII, was joined with Picardy under Francis I.

In the early days of the Capetian dynasty there had been no such thing as a local administration, properly so called, for feudalism had dispersed the regalian powers, leaving no scope for the administrative powers which are their normal concomitants. Not so much a sovereign as a seigneur, the King was neither required nor permitted to administer the provinces; his function in this sphere was limited to management of the estates which composed his seigneurial patrimony. This he discharged through agents whom he called *Prévôts*, and whom he was obliged to create for the purpose, seeing that the administrative machinery of the Carolingians had ceased to function. Feudalism had changed the status of the Dukes and Counts, who had been the chief officials of the earlier system; they had become vassals, who administered in their own interest the fiefs which they had once governed in the King's name, and set up a shadowy feudal service to a suzerain in the place of the obedience which they had once owed to a master. In much the same way the *Vicomtes*, having made themselves the independent possessors of hereditary dignities, scorned any longer to perform administrative functions. Of the Carolingian bureaucracy there remained only the *Viguiers*, who were the successors of the *Vicarii*, and who, occupying the humblest place, had not been important enough to achieve independence. The *Viguiers* provided the nucleus of a local government staff, but their powers were not very extensive, and their activities were restricted to the towns. They did not suffice for the administration of the demesne, which demanded the presence of more numerous officials and the setting up of an authority operative in rural as well as in urban districts; and to meet these needs the *Prévôts* and *Bayles* were created. In practice the activities of the *Prévôt* were for a long time confined to demesne management, but in theory his authority was wide, seeing that he represented the sovereign and possessed by delegation all the sovereign's powers. As those powers grew, the authority of the *Prévôt* grew with them,

and these officials increased in numbers, as the demesne expanded in size. It fell to the *Prévôt* to proclaim Royal ordinances and enforce obedience to them, to execute the sentences of various courts, to apprehend delinquents, and to maintain security on the public roads. The care of the demesne had been his from the first; he managed it, developed it, controlled its labour force, and collected rents and dues, with power to compel payment and settle disputes. Charged with these duties, and armed with these powers, he had by the end of the fifteenth century become an essential cog in the administrative, judicial, and fiscal machines, and it would not be too much to say that he had provided the foundation upon which the administrative system of the monarchy was being built up. In the fiscal sphere, it is true, his importance had by then rather diminished than increased, for the practice of farming out to him the taxes of his district had engendered abuses which were leading to its suppression, and his fiscal duties were now confined for the most part to a mere receipt and transmission of local revenue. In the judicial sphere he was of more consequence, presiding as he did over a court which formed the bottom rung in the Crown's judicial ladder; he could not, indeed, hear the cases which under the name of *cas royaux* were reserved for the arbitrament of a higher tribunal; nor was any noble constrained to plead before him; but commoners were amenable to his jurisdiction, and, charged with the maintenance of law and order in his district, he was empowered to punish minor infractions of the criminal code. In the administrative sphere his duty was to execute the orders, and generally to forward the policy, of the central Government.¹

When the Royal estates were small and near at hand, the few agents who managed them could be controlled adequately by the King and his entourage, but as the demesne expanded, as the Royal estates stretched out into distant provinces, and as the progress of the Crown added to the powers of the central Government and so to the number and the activities of its representatives, the need arose for more effective control and greater unity of direction. Provision for this need was first made towards the end of the twelfth century, when Philip Augustus gave permanent commissions to the

¹ Chénon, *Histoire générale du droit français*, vol. i, pp. 603-8.

envoys whom his predecessors had been accustomed to send out intermittently from the *Cour du Roi* on tours of inspection of the demesne. The new officials were called *Baillis* and Seneschals. It was not long before their character and functions began to change. Though originally the emissaries of the central Government, and instituted to enforce its control over the provincial administration, they were gradually detached from the *Cour du Roi*, and themselves became local agents in charge of definite districts. In being divorced from the central Government, however, they were not permitted to establish themselves in independence of it, for the Crown was both wiser and stronger than of yore, and care was taken to see that the new officials remained dependent upon, and answerable to, the sovereign. The King appointed them; the King could dismiss them; the Parlement insisted upon its right to supervise them; and at regular intervals they were required to repair to the capital and give an account of their stewardship. In a word, their status was as near that of the modern civil servant as was possible in the conditions, or compatible with the political conceptions, of the age.

By Francis I's time the *Bailli* was beginning to suffer an eclipse. At the zenith of his powers he had been a functionary of no mean consequence. Seeing that he had been instituted to link up the central and provincial governments, and that he came to the provinces as the representative of the sovereign, it was natural that he should acquire a variety of powers, not only administrative, but also judicial, fiscal, and even military. As an administrator, he published and enforced Royal ordinances, carried out the orders of the King and the directions of the central Government, executed the sentences of tribunals, made police regulations, maintained the peace, superintended the administration of his district, controlled and punished the *Prévôts*, *Bayles*, and other subordinate officials, saw to the management and exploitation of the demesne, received accounts from *Prévôts*, *Bayles*, and forest officers, kept a register of fiefs, and carried out public works. In his judicial capacity he heard appeals from the decisions of *Prévôts*, dealt with cases relating to the demesne, and constituted a court of first instance for cases in which members of the nobility were concerned. As a fiscal agent, he received fines and judicial fees, collected dues

payable in lieu of military service and other extraordinary dues, received all moneys for which the *Prévôts* were liable to account, paid the salaries of local officers and other expenses of his district, and remitted the balance to the Treasury. As a military leader, he called up those who were liable for service, commanded the local levies of his district, and provided for its defence.

At one time a lawyer, the *Bailli* was now usually a noble, but plebeian birth was no bar to tenure of the office, and a commoner or even a foreigner would occasionally be employed. Appointments, once made by the King in person, were now settled by the King in Council, and the successful candidate was sworn in by the Parlement, by the *Chambre des Comptes*, and by the Treasurers. The salary varied within wide limits, but as a rule stood at the figure at which it had been originally fixed, and that figure, always modest, had been rendered meagre by the change in the value of money. It is to be observed, however, that, if his pay had become relatively smaller, the duties of the *Bailli* had become actually less onerous, that the number and cost of his subordinates had much increased, and that his fees, dues, and perquisites would have sufficed to make the office lucrative, had no salary whatever been attached to it. Though ordinances decreed that he should reside in his district, though Parlements sought to insist upon residence, and though States-General complained loudly of non-residence, the *Bailli* had become an absentee, and usually held some other official position which excused, if it did not necessitate, his presence in the capital or at the Court.

When Francis I came to the throne, *Baillis* and Seneschals had lost much of their old importance. Absenteeism accounted in part for their decline, but in part only. In large measure their loss of power was due to the fact that with the growing complexity of Government business the multifarious duties of the *Bailli* had outgrown the capacities of a single man, and his insufficiency had been met by the transfer of his powers to substitutes or by the creation of new offices. His fiscal powers had gone first, when the clerks whom he employed to collect revenue had entered the service of the Treasury, and had become revenue officials with the title of *Receveurs*. A part of his responsibility for the care of the

demesne had been taken from him, when the woods and forests had been handed over to a special service responsible to the *Chambre des Comptes*. The institution of Governors and the growth of the regular army had combined to destroy his military importance. His judicial powers had passed to the legal experts whom he had engaged to assist him, and who now, as his lieutenants or substitutes, held judicial office under the Crown. Such administrative powers as he still retained were about to pass from him, and then his sole functions would be calling up the King's vassals, who were seldom summoned to the colours, and presiding over local assemblies, which rarely met.

The *Lieutenant-Général*, upon whom the *Bailli's* judicial powers had devolved, was himself represented by more or less numerous substitutes, known as *Lieutenants-Particuliers*, and in every *bailliage* were to be found also the *Procureur* and the *Avocat du Roi*. The *Lieutenant-Général* had begun by advising the *Bailli* in his legal perplexities in much the same way as the Clerk of a Petty Sessional Court assists the Bench, but after a time he had ceased to be the servant of the *Bailli* and had become the servant of the State. The *Bailli* no longer appointed him, for in 1510 Louis XII had decreed that the *Lieutenant* should be chosen by the King from amongst three candidates presented by a committee composed of the *Bailli*, the King's officers, and six notable persons of the *bailliage*. Nor could the *Bailli* dismiss him, for that could only be done by the Council, after inquiry and for good reason shown. As a rule he was a *bourgeois*, for the Ordinance of Blois required that he should have graduated in law at a recognized university, and this was a qualification more commonly to be found in the offspring of an intelligent and ambitious *bourgeoisie* than in the scions of an illiterate and unprogressive gentle class. The noble was not, as such, debarred from employment, and instances occurred in which the *Lieutenant-Général* was drawn from the ranks of the local squirearchy; but these were not so numerous as to affect the general character of this branch of the Judiciary, and Macaulay might have said with substantial truth that there were gentlemen and there were lawyers on the judicial Bench of provincial France, but the lawyers were not gentlemen, and the gentlemen were not lawyers.

When a host of officials had succeeded to the powers of the deposed *Bailli*, there arose much the same need for control as that by which the *Bailli* himself had been called into existence. This need the institution of Governors might have been expected to meet, but in this particular the new departure failed of success through two defects. In the first place, if they were to provide a superior control of the local administration, it would have been necessary that Governors should be found in every province, whereas in practice they were confined to such of the frontier and sea-board provinces as were exposed to invasion in time of war. In the second place, as that limitation was of itself of a nature to suggest, they were primarily of military origin, and the fact that they were put in charge of a group of administrative districts arose from the need, not of civil control, but of military defence. The post was one of considerable distinction, for the Governor represented the sovereign in one of the great territorial divisions of the country, and holders of the office were invariably taken from the ranks of the Royal Princes or chosen amongst the most illustrious representatives of the great nobility. Besides being distinguished, the post was lucrative, for the salary was always large and sometimes enormous, and there were handsome additions in the shape of numerous perquisites and of gifts prompted by Royal partiality or by the prudent liberality of the province; and men who usually took the office to make what they could out of it, were ready enough to pocket all that they could get. Like the *Bailli*, and in an even greater degree, the Governor was generally a pluralist, and, as his other appointments were apt to necessitate his presence at Court, he was rarely seen in his Government. The province did not object, for it knew that its interests could best be served by one who was in a position to influence King and Council in its favour. The King raised no objection, for the last thing he wanted to see was a province bestowing its affection on some rich and powerful seigneur. Even as it was, the Crown was disposed to take umbrage at the influence and authority of the Governors, and the great ordinance of 1499 had limited and defined their powers, restricting them for the most part to the routine work of defensive preparation. Despite these precautions, Governors continued to usurp excessive powers,

and constituted a menace with which Francis I would be called upon to deal.

In the absence of the Governor and the *Bailli* the actual task of administration was for the most part carried on by a committee known as the Conseil du Bailliage. Sitting twice a week, or oftener, if the need arose, this committee kept its finger on the pulse of provincial life, and safeguarded the interests of the district in every sphere, administrative, judicial, financial, military, and political. It was therefore a matter of some moment that the nation should have been represented on it. To a large extent its composition was, indeed, bureaucratic, for the King's officers—*Bailli*, *Lieutenant-Général*, *Lieutenants-Particuliers*, *Procureur* and *Avocat du Roi*, and *Prévôts*—sat *ex officio*; but it did contain some members who were supposed to represent the people. At one time this element had been directly representative of the three estates, but it was now tending to lose its popular character by the practice of taking the unofficial members solely from amongst the lawyers who practised in the local courts. The Royal official was generally an alert guardian of the Royal authority, and no very vigorous stand against the encroachments of despotism was to be expected from the professional members, who looked to the Crown for promotion and reward. Yet in the Conseil du Bailliage the monarch had always to reckon with a body capable in some degree both of upholding bureaucratic traditions and of safeguarding popular rights, and hence by its mere existence serving to provide some sort of barrier against the encroachments of arbitrary power.

To complete my sketch of the administrative system, I must add a word about the forestry service. In the thirteenth century the management of Royal woods and forests, as of other parts of the demesne, was in the hands of the *Baillis* and Seneschals, assisted by a staff which formed part of the ordinary administrative personnel. Early in the following century a distinct forest administration was gradually constituted in response to a need which became more urgent as the demesne increased in extent, the personnel grew in numbers, and a more methodical development and more effective supervision were called for by the ever-growing urgency of Treasury demands. The actual date of the first

appointment of *Maîtres des Eaux et Forêts* is not known, but it may with probability be assigned to the end of the thirteenth century. By the administrative reorganization initiated after the victories of Charles VII and completed by the reforms of the succeeding age, the forestry service was established in the form in which it existed in the sixteenth century. The service then consisted of a Grand Maître, a Receveur Général des Eaux et Forêts, *Maîtres*, Lieutenants, foresters or verderers, and, in the lowest place in the hierarchy, *Sergents* and *Garenniers*, by whom the more menial tasks were performed. For many years the forestry officers of the Crown concerned themselves with demesne forests only, but in course of time they acquired some powers of supervision over forests in general. Efficient administration of his woods and forests was an object dear to the heart of every French king, for their yield formed an important part of his revenue, and pursuit of the game which was nurtured in their sylvan sanctuaries was one of the main interests of his life.

Like the *Bailli*, the *Maître des Eaux et Forêts* was originally a legal member of the *Cour du Roi*, sent into the provinces to exercise control under a roving commission; but with him, as with the *Bailli*, an indefinite authority was gradually transformed into responsibility for a definite district, the growing scope of his powers demanding that they should be exercised in a defined sphere. Gradually, too, the office passed out of legal hands, being given occasionally to a churchman and occasionally to a retired revenue officer, but more usually to the noble holder of some other post in the army or about the Court; and it was characteristic of the service that Charles VIII's favourite, Étienne de Vesc, should have been at once *Bailli* of Meaux and *Maître Enquesteur et Général Réformateur* of the forests in the Île-de-France, Champagne, and Brie. After the creation of the Grande Maîtrise the selection of his subordinates was generally left to the chief; otherwise they were appointed by the King in Council; when appointed, they were sworn in by the Parlement and the *Chambre des Comptes*, and then were formally admitted to office by the Grand Maître. Their duties comprised the general task of forest supervision: they saw to it that the King's ordinances were obeyed, carried out the

instructions of the Grand Maître, communicated his orders to subordinate officials, admitted these officials to office and exercised disciplinary powers over them, inspected the forests twice a year, deciding what timber was to be felled and what development undertaken, and furnished reports for the information of the *Chambre des Comptes*. To that tribunal they transmitted all accounts rendered by their underlings, and, when forestry accounts were under review, they attended in person, to assist it with explanations and advice. Their jurisdiction extended to all forest affairs: they dealt with questions arising out of timber sales and the trade in wood, with all crimes affecting the forests, and with all delinquencies of their subordinates; but their decisions were subject to review by the Grand Maître and by the *Parlement*.

The forester or *verderer*, commonly called the *Gruyer*, stood to the *Maître* in much the same relation as the *Prévôt* to the *Bailli*. Like the *Maître*, he was appointed by the King or by the Grand Maître, had his commission registered in the *Chambre des Comptes*, and was sworn in at the *Table de Marbre*. His task was to direct the exploitation of the forests in the interest of the King, to protect Royal property and rights against encroachment, to pay and control the *Sergents* and other subaltern agents, to report regularly to the *Maîtres* on the state of the forests, to collect and transmit the proceeds of timber sales, rents, dues, and fines, and, subject to appeal to a *Maître*, to deal with petty forest cases and with minor infractions of the forest law. So lucrative was it in salary, perquisites, privileges, and dues that the office of *Gruyer* was an object of ambition even with the greater nobility, supplying a good instance of the wastefulness which characterized all the services of the Crown as a result of their rather haphazard growth.

The chief defect of the forestry service, as at first constituted, was the lack of co-ordination and central control; and it was to remedy this defect that a new office, the *Grande Maîtrise*, was instituted in the middle of the fourteenth century. The Grand Maître—or, to give him his full official designation, the *Souverain Maître et Réformateur Général des Eaux et Forêts*—was almost invariably a great seigneur by birth, and became a person of considerable consequence by virtue of his official position. His salary of 4,000*l.* a year

did not, perhaps, compare very favourably with the stipends payable to some other Great Officers or even with the remuneration of the more fortunate among the provincial Governors, but, like many another, it was greatly swelled by perquisites, whilst his patronage usually comprised a right of appointment to all posts in his department, and as often as not he would hold some other office under the Crown. The whole forest administration was subject to his control, and the whole country was, in forest matters, subject to his jurisdiction. In Paris he sat at the Table de Marbre, where the Constable and the Admiral also exercised their judicial functions, whilst in Rouen he dealt with the Norman forests in a court which had once been called the Échiquier, but which in 1508 had been reorganized as a Table de Marbre on the Parisian model. In these courts he or his lieutenants heard appeals against the decisions of the *Maîtres*, and for a long time the jurisdiction was sovereign, but in the sixteenth century there was a right of appeal to the Parlement, to which also some individuals and ecclesiastical societies had the privilege of direct access. The Grand Maître did not deal with financial matters, a special officer, the Receveur Général des Eaux et Forêts, centralizing revenue and expenditure under the supervision of the Chambre des Comptes.¹

¹ The best account of the forest administration is to be found in E. Decq's 'Administration des eaux et forêts' in the *Bibliothèque de l'École des Chartes*, vols. lxxxiii and lxxxiv: see especially vol. lxxxiii, pp. 67-104, 332-54, and vol. lxxxiv, pp. 92-106. Brief accounts occur elsewhere, e.g. Viollet, *Le Roi et ses ministres*, pp. 471-3.

XXXI

POLITICAL CONDITIONS

LEGISLATION. CODIFICATION OF CUSTOMS. JUSTICE

HAVING passed the administrative machinery in review, I turn to the subject of the legislative system which gave to the country the laws by which it was governed. At the beginning of the sixteenth century the legislative power was a monopoly of the sovereign, for by that time the Crown had made good all the ground which it had lost at the end of the Carolingian age. In that age feudalism in the plenitude of its power had deprived the King of the right to legislate for the greater part of the kingdom by restricting him to the issue of orders operative only in his own demesne; and since in this respect he had been on an equal footing with the great feudatories, the legislative functions which he had retained were seigneurial in character rather than Royal. Even in his feeblest days, however, the sovereign had preserved a quality whereby he was eventually to recover his lost regalian power. None had ever disputed his suzerainty; as suzerain, he had the right to call upon his barons to aid him with their counsel; and in practice it had been his wont to summon them to his side, that he might obtain their approval of the measures which he desired to put in force. An ordinance approved in this manner was applied over an area much wider than the Royal demesne, since it ran in the territories of all the barons who signified their acceptance of it, and as a result of this procedure the way was prepared for the advance of the Royal decree to a position of enhanced and extended authority. It came to be considered, first, that an ordinance accepted by some barons might be imposed upon all, and from that standpoint public opinion then progressed a further stage, to embrace the view that a Royal ordinance was possessed of an inherent authority which made it a law effective throughout the kingdom. This view found favour the more readily in that it was supported alike by the Canon and by the Roman law. The Canon lawyer, in whose eyes monarchy was of divine institution, desired the legislative supremacy of the Crown in the belief that its legisla-

tion must necessarily enure to the common good. Equally favourable to the Crown, and no less firm, were the convictions of the legist, nourished as he was upon the maxims of a Caesarean code, which taught him that the will of the Prince had the force of law.

Thus by the time Francis I came to the throne it had once more come about that the legislative power was vested in the King alone. It was no longer necessary that he should consult the barons, whose concurrence had once been necessary to the general acceptance of his decrees, for the barons had disappeared or had lost their importance; and the representatives of the nation, though occasionally assembled in States-General, had failed to acquire the powers which feudalism had relinquished. In an earlier chapter of this work I have discussed the part which representative institutions had played in the national life, and we need not now retrace ground already trodden. Suffice it here to recall that the States-General had never shared in the framing of ordinances, nor advanced any effective claim to the direct exercise of legislative powers. Indirectly, however, their influence had been considerable, for in their *cabiers* or schedules of remonstrance they were wont to pass the life of the nation in review, and the sovereign would consult their wishes either under the compulsion of his financial necessities or through a public-spirited desire to promote the common weal. A notable instance had recently occurred. Fruitless though it had seemed at the time, the patient labour of the States-General of 1484 had inspired and provoked the great achievement in remedial legislation which distinguished the reign of Louis XII, and helped to win for its author the proud title of Père du Peuple.

The States-General were not the only representative institutions of the country: they had their counterpart in provincial Estates, which were for a district what the States-General were for the kingdom, a representative assembly of its three orders. Whether evolved, as in some provinces, from machinery of Royal creation, or derived, as in others, from the maintenance of local liberties after the annexation of an independent county by the Crown, provincial Estates had come into existence in many provinces by the middle of the fifteenth century, and yet at its close were already beginning

to disappear. Like the national Estates, they met only by the King's command, but they were more fortunate in enjoying a prescriptive right to be summoned at regular intervals, and it was not pretended that their grants of subsidies were of indefinite duration. Despite these advantages, however, their powers were more apparent than real. The Crown, which had created or encouraged them with a view to avoiding assemblies of the national Estates, had taken care that they should not acquire an independent position; and the King had nothing to fear from tax-voting machines, carefully schooled into docile acquiescence. Thus humiliated, the local Estates were neglected by the classes whose support might have preserved them, and it was only in districts where local feeling was keen that they retained their importance. Upon the provinces in which they were suppressed or ignored a sensible, though not, perhaps, a serious, loss was inflicted. In a provincial assembly exactions, which could not be resisted, might at least be criticized and condemned; and districts whose own representatives determined the incidence, and managed the collection, of taxation, were relieved at all events of that tyranny of Treasury officials which was a galling incident of the fiscal usurpations of the Crown. By the right, too, which the provincial Estates had acquired to raise money for local purposes, the *pays d'États* did actually enjoy in some measure the advantage of local self-government, and by the excellence of the many public works which they undertook they showed that they were capable of turning the advantage to account. As regards the making of laws, however, the provinces which possessed local assemblies were in no better position than those which were devoid of representative institutions, for nowhere had provincial Estates ever been admitted to share in the legislative powers of the Crown.

Akin to the national and provincial Estates in functions, though dissimilar in constitution, were the gatherings known in French history as Assemblies of Notables. Their main point of difference from the Estates was that they were not elective; the choice of the nobles and prelates who were called to sit in them rested entirely with the King, whilst the members of the third estate were drawn from the municipal officers of the towns and from the Parlement of Paris

and other judicial bodies. In theory a meeting of 'discreet and learned' men,¹ competent to advise the King in a difficulty or to strengthen his hands in a crisis, an Assembly of Notables was in fact a carefully packed gathering, as destitute of the inclination, as it was devoid of the power, to control the Crown. The best that could be said for it was that it threw a mantle of respectability over the nakedness of absolutism.

So far as representative institutions were concerned, then, the King was left in sole and unfettered enjoyment of the legislative power. The claim to fetter him—for there was such a claim—was advanced, not by the representatives of the nation, but by the magistracy of the sovereign courts. Modest in its origins, the pretensions of the Judiciary had thriven upon a series of usurpations which had been tolerated by the Crown, and by now these pretensions had assumed proportions that threatened to make them formidable. The thing had come to pass in this way. When an ordinance was issued, it was necessary that it should be brought to the knowledge of the judges by whom it was to be applied; in times when the printing-press was unknown this result was achieved by sending the text to the court for entry upon its files; in order that this entry might be made, it was necessary that the recording clerks should be set in motion by an order of the court; the giving of such an order involved precedent discussion; during this discussion the magistrates who took part were offered an opportunity for criticism or objection; having assumed the right to criticize and object, they were led on to proffer remonstrances; and, finally, they asserted a right to refuse registration until their objections had been removed, proclaiming that registration, so far from being an empty formality, was an essential condition of the validity of an ordinance. In adopting this attitude, the Parlements and other supreme courts were making a bid for powers which would have established their control over the Crown in the exercise of its legislative authority. The bid was not destined to succeed, for the sovereign, when he encountered opposition, could overcome it either by direct intervention in a *lit de justice*, when his presence automatically extinguished the authority which the judges derived by delegation

¹ 'Gens entendus et experts.'

from himself, or by the issue of those peremptory orders, known as *lettres de jussion*, which no tribunal might venture to defy. By one or other of these means the King could always get his own way in the end, and, if he did not always trouble to insist upon registration, it was because his edicts and ordinances did not in practice depend upon enrolment for their validity. It was not unknown that they should be left unregistered for two hundred years, and this fact shows how little the formality of enrolment could be regarded as vital, and how far were the supreme courts from exercising effective control over the legislative power of the Crown. Yet the claim had been advanced, and was not wholly futile, for with popular opinion behind them the Judiciary could exert pressure which the most despotic sovereign did not awlays find it prudent to resist. Down to the accession of Francis I the Judiciary had upon the whole behaved with moderation, and had found an answering tolerance in the Crown, but in the age which was about to begin the relation between the King and his Parlement would not for long be governed by good feeling and mutual forbearance.

The legislative power manifested itself in various forms. There were the ordinance, properly so called, the edict, the declaration, and letters patent. The first and most important of these, the ordinance, was a legislative act of a general character, operative throughout the kingdom, or at least throughout the demesne; and it was usually known by the name of the place whence it was issued, or, if it were founded upon the recommendations of States-General, then of the town in which the States had sat. The edict bore a superficial resemblance to the ordinance, but was more restricted in scope, being limited either as to the area legislated for, or as to the class of persons affected, or as to the matter dealt with; almost invariably it was issued by the King of his own motion and without prompting by Estates; and it derived its name either from its subject-matter, or, as with the famous Edict of Nantes, from the place of issue. A declaration was a document issued to interpret, modify, amend, or complete existing ordinances or edicts, and it was distinguishable from these by a different method of dating and by a less punctilious observance of formalities in signing and sealing. Letters patent, which were so called because they were left open

when sent to the Chancellor for the affixing of the Royal seal, were even more limited in their operation than edicts, applying usually to an individual, community, or small class of persons, and not infrequently embodying the grant of a privilege or favour, such as ennoblement or a pardon. Fundamentally opposed in character, form, and substance to letters patent were the documents which in the sixteenth century were usually called *lettres closes*, and which were afterwards to acquire a sinister notoriety under the name of *lettres de cachet*. These documents proceeded, not from an exercise of the legislative power, but from an exertion of the executive authority; they were fastened, not with the official or public seals in the custody of the Chancellor or Garde des Sceaux, but with a secret or privy seal, which was kept by one of the King's Chamberlains; and they derived their name of *lettres closes* from the fact that they were handed fastened and sealed to the officer who was to execute the order which they contained.

When a law has been passed, something more remains to be done, and we may note in passing that an incidental benefit was derived from judicial insistence upon the formality of registration. It was essential that Royal ordinances and edicts should be brought to the cognizance of all subjects of the Crown, since all were affected by them, and in days when the printing-press had not yet established itself as the great disseminator of knowledge, the formality of registration helped in some degree to secure for the statute law a publicity which otherwise would have been wholly lacking. Lack of publicity opened the door to grave abuses, and that was bad enough; but it was even worse that there could in the nature of things be but little respect in the popular mind for laws upon which the prevailing ignorance conferred the character of a secret code. The existence of these defects did not escape the notice of the zealous patriots who met at Tours on the morrow of Louis XI's death. The States-General of 1484 were not content with demanding that the legislation of Charles VII and his predecessors should be preserved and enforced; they coupled with their demand a proposal that all laws in force should be rehearsed publicly at stated intervals in every district capital. Ignored at the time, like many another of their recommendations, the

proposal was revived and adopted by Louis XII, who by the Ordinance of Blois directed that a register of laws should be kept in all divisions of the courts of Parlement and in all inferior tribunals, and commanded that there should be a public recitation of them in those places twice a year. The effect of this provision was good, so far as it went. It did not, and could not, compare with the results presently to be achieved by the introduction of printing and the spread of education; but something was done to bring the laws to the knowledge of those by whom they must be obeyed, to reduce the risk of perversions of justice at the hands of those by whom they were administered, and, in the measure in which publicity was secured, to win for Royal decrees the authority which is the ultimate sanction of every legislative enactment.

In the constitutional and juridical theory of the day there were certain 'fundamental laws', such as the famous Salic Law, by which the Crown was bound. The doctrine of the 'fundamental laws' was the creation of the legists. In the days when the Crown had been feeble, the legists, who desired to strengthen its authority, had sought to further their ends by adopting the absolutist principles of Roman law; but when confronted in the fifteenth century with the consequences of their own success, they had begun to entertain some not unreasonable apprehensions, and they then declared that the legislative power of the Crown was restricted by the necessity the King lay under to govern with justice, promote the common weal, and respect the 'fundamental laws' of the kingdom. Though constantly invoked by lawyers, Parlements, and States-General, these laws had never been laid down with precision, but seven at least were generally accepted as being established beyond the possibility of cavil or dispute. Four dealt with the succession to the throne, enjoining the succession of males and the exclusion of women, bastards, and heretics. From the first of them, which laid down that the succession of male to male was not merely hereditary, but was also statutory and legal, certain important consequences followed: the King never died; he could neither renounce the throne nor abdicate; and since he succeeded in his own right, and not as heir to his predecessor, he was under no obligation to pay that pre-

decessor's debts, or observe his treaties, or retain his officials. Practical expedients mitigated the awkwardness of theoretical extravagance: the King's credit was saved by bringing in some great city as guarantor of his loans; validity was given to his treaties by a solemn ratification by Parlements and States-General; and judicial and administrative continuity was secured by a decree of the Parlement, which directed that the holders of commissions should carry on until the pleasure of the new monarch should be known. Of the other three 'fundamental laws', two concerned the demesne, laying down its inalienability and its acquisition by merger of all the private property of a Prince upon his accession; and the seventh, a weapon of Philippe le Bel's that Louis XI had lately re-brandished, laid down that the temporal power was independent of the spiritual, and that a King, as King, was not subject to the Pope, and could not be deposed by Papal authority. Such were the 'fundamental laws', more imposing, perhaps, in appearance than stable in reality, for no means had been devised for compelling the King to acknowledge their authority or observe their provisions, so that the utmost that could be hoped for from them was that they might exert the restraining influence of a moral check.¹

With the exception of the 'fundamental laws'—if, indeed, they were properly to be reckoned as an exception—the legislative power of the King was unrestricted, and he could by his ordinances and decrees do what he would, and enact what he pleased. In theory, too, it was to him alone that the initiation and drafting of legislation belonged, though in practice his legislative activity was usually inspired by Ministers, Parlements, or States-General, and his laws were drafted by his Council or by committees of judges and jurists. With the single exception of the 'fundamental laws', the King was not even supposed to be subject to any law, whether of his predecessors' enactment or of his own, and therefore he could disregard legal formalities, ignore customary procedure, and in his uncontrolled discretion alter or revoke existing laws. In theory, therefore, the legislative power of the Crown was scarcely susceptible of extension. In fact, its influence and authority in the legislative sphere fell a good deal short of this theoretical completeness, and during this

¹ Chénon, *Histoire générale du droit français*, vol. ii, pp. 334-45.

age their scope was actually much enlarged by a process which brought the foundations of the social structure within the sphere of the King's legislation. This process was the codification, or redaction and promulgation, of the numerous customs which gave to France the chief part of her civil law.

Medieval society was in general governed not so much by rules established by legislation as by customs prevailing among the people, and in France such customs played a specially important part in the national life. In relation to its customs the country was divided into two distinct spheres. Roman law prevailed in the south, which was the *pays de droit écrit*, and customary law obtained in the north, which was the *pays de coutumes*, the dividing line between them starting from the Île d'Oléron, passing to the north of Saintonge, Périgord, and the Limousin, crossing Auvergne, and skirting the northern boundaries of Mâconnais and the Pays de Gex. As a recent writer on French law has pointed out, however, it has to be remembered that the Roman law which prevailed in the south possessed no legislative sanction, but was in itself in the nature of a customary code, and, further, that it did not exclude the existence of local customs, seeing that important medieval institutions had never come within its purview, and consequently had stood in need of customary regulation. Conversely, the customary law of the north underwent to some extent the influence of the written law which prevailed in the rest of the kingdom. 'In the result, the whole of France was under customary law, the customs of the north being of Frankish origin, whilst in the south the Roman law formed the general custom.'¹

This rule of customary law was a legacy from the feudal days, when France had been a congeries of independent seigneuries, in each of which some baron had claimed and exercised legislative power, and when there had been no overriding royal authority to enforce legislative unity, and no universally respected Judiciary to preserve the reign of a common law. During a period of political segregation and of legislative chaos it had come about that districts, towns, and even villages had acquired their own customs or peculiar local laws. These local laws were of various kinds, for a

¹ Chénon, *Histoire générale du droit français*, vol. i, pp. 488-9.

custom might be general or local, provincial or municipal. Provincial customs obtained for the most part in the centre and west, municipal customs in the north and north-east, as, for example, in Paris, Amiens, and Rheims. In the fifteenth century the various customs in force in the kingdom numbered some seven hundred, of which rather more than half were general or local customs operative in the *pays de coutumes* of the north, and the rest were supplementary to the Roman law in the *pays de droit écrit* of the south.

A country which lives under customary laws enjoys some advantages, for a custom, being of popular creation, must necessarily embody the popular will, whilst a ready adaptability to changing conditions is another feature of this type of law. In the France of that period, however, these and any other advantages which the system may have possessed were more than off-set by many and considerable drawbacks. The system was characterized by uncertainty, obscurity, inconsistency, complexity, and diversity, and these characteristics were productive of innumerable and interminable disputes. Not only did every district have its own law, but also that law was floating and uncertain, difficult to ascertain, and difficult to apply. Some customs, being wholly oral and traditional, were known only to a handful of local experts and aged inhabitants. For others there were, indeed, sources of a kind in *coutumiers*, *livres de pratique*, and collections of leading cases, but all of these were the private compilations of judicial officers, local practitioners, or jurisconsults, and, as such, were devoid of binding force. It followed that there was no text or source whose authority could be invoked when, as invariably happened, one party to a cause denied the existence of a law alleged by the other; and the result was that, unless the judge and his assessors could determine the point of their own knowledge, it became necessary to refer it to a local jury for a declaration whether or no the alleged custom really existed. As may readily be supposed, the *enquête par turbe*, as this local inquiry was called, was fruitful in judicial inconveniences, for at the best it involved great expense and delay, and at the worst it deepened the confusion by failing to furnish a conclusive settlement of the issue in dispute. Another unfortunate characteristic impressed upon customary law by its local limitations was its infinite diversity,

and this, which had not greatly mattered when a man spent his life in one spot, began to manifest its inconveniences, as soon as people took to moving about. Indeed, the more society progressed, the more was it hampered by the defects of a customary law which was uncertain, fluid, and diversified, and therefore a direct incitement to the spirit of litigiousness which pervaded the nation.

In this, as in other matters, the faithful interpreter of the aspirations of the people, the States-General called attention to the need for an authentic official code as being essential to the proper administration of justice. The matter was one in which the King saw eye to eye with his people, for nothing could have better pleased the legists who watched over the interests of the Crown than a process which at one and the same time would demonstrate that all the laws of the kingdom derived their force from the authority of the Prince, and would simplify or reduce the welter of local usages, the baleful legacy of feudalism, which presented so formidable an obstacle to the Royal policy of centralization. If the ideal was a unified country, living under one law, as it lived under one King, then it was at least a step in the right direction that local customs should be ascertained, recorded, and promulgated under the authority of the Crown.

There were two stages in the process of codification: compilation or redaction—the *mise par écrit*, as it was called—came first, and verification and publication followed. Though the authority under which codifications were carried through was that derived from letters patent issued by the King, it was essential that in a matter in which the interests of the people were so intimately concerned there should be effective co-operation between Crown and people in the accomplishment of a common task. Under the procedure which was adopted this end was achieved. When codification of its customary law was to be put in hand, the *Bailli* or Seneschal of a district was ordered by the King to have a draft of the custom prepared by local practitioners, and then to submit it to an assembly of its three Estates. In this assembly the clergy were represented by the chief benefice-holders of the area, such as Bishops, Abbots, Priors, and representatives of Cathedral Chapters; the nobles by the chief fief-holders; and the commons by the delegates of the towns—all of them

partaking, however, not as deputies, but as individuals. The business of the assembly was to examine the draft code which had been prepared by the lawyers for its approval, and the method followed was to submit the draft for discussion clause by clause, all doubtful or disputed clauses being reserved for examination by the Parlement within whose jurisdiction the district lay. Under the procedure originally adopted the process of compilation was kept wholly distinct from that of verification and publication, the *mise par écrit* being referred for further examination and final approval to members of the Grand Conseil or the appropriate Parlement, and confirmation by the King being made upon their report. Experience showed that the progress made under this system was very slow, and a speedier method was introduced by Charles VIII, who authorized Royal Commissioners to go to the provinces, meet the Estates, examine the revised drafts with them, and immediately publish all agreed clauses, reserving for final approval only such items as presented really serious difficulty. The process of codification was considerably accelerated by this innovation, the work of the itinerant Commissioners being performed with commendable dispatch, if instances recorded in Louis XII's time may be taken as typical specimens of their methods. For example, in 1509 the customs of the four bailiwicks of Champagne were dealt with in a month. The Royal Commissioners, a President and a Councillor of the Parlement, left Paris on October 1st, held an assembly of the Estates at Meaux on the 3rd, and on the 5th published the general custom of the bailiwick in 219 articles, with the addition of some local laws. At Vitry, which they reached on the 11th, the local code in 148 clauses was published on the 15th. On the 19th they met the assembly of Chaumont, and published 120 articles there on the next day. At Troyes, where the local representatives would seem to have been more argumentative or debatable points more numerous, the assembly met on the 26th and remained in session for four days, and it was not until the 29th that the Commissioners were able to publish the 203 agreed articles of the Troyes code. By the end of the month they were back in Paris, their work done.

If society was to derive full benefit from codification, it was necessary, not only that customs should be ascertained

and recorded, but also that the authoritative official texts in which they were embodied should be open to general inspection. Provision for this need was made by Louis XII, when he directed that two official copies should be made of each custom published by his Commissioners, one being deposited in the archives of the bailiwick, and the other being sent to the appropriate Parlement, which was ordered to keep a register of all the customary laws of the territory subject to its jurisdiction. When a custom had once been published, the official version alone was thenceforth to be accepted in the courts, and the ancient *enquête par turbe* was done away with, the suppression of the old procedure having been one of the great objects aimed at, when the vast business of codification was taken in hand. It was not originally intended that codification should be used as a means for the amelioration of customs; the intention was merely to declare the law, not to alter it; but as the process of codification proceeded, it became apparent that the opportunity for improvement was too good to be missed, and the incorporation of agreed changes was formally sanctioned by Charles VIII. Experience also demonstrated that codification was open to objection, in so far as it rendered rigid and immutable a customary law which had once been elastic and adaptable to changing needs. This difficulty was dealt with by Louis XII, when he authorized his Commissioners to 'reform' or revise published codes in much the same way as unpublished customs were examined and promulgated.

Revisions played their part in the great outburst of codifying activity which marked the reign of Louis XII. Begun by Charles VII, whose Ordinance of Montils-les-Tours in 1454 first established the appropriate procedure, the work of codification was pursued slowly and intermittently during the first thirty years. Promulgation of the Burgundian customs represented the sum total of Charles VII's own achievement in this sphere, and Louis XI, distracted by many more pressing matters, could claim as his contribution no more than the publication of the customs in Touraine, Anjou, Melun, Issoudun, and Bourges. In Charles VIII's time a new spirit was evoked by the States-General of Tours, and the languishing national endeavour began to be pressed forward with a new zeal. In 1493 Charles decreed the redaction

of the custom of Lorris, admittedly one of the best in the kingdom, and therefore useful as a pattern when other customs were being discussed; in 1496 he authorized the incorporation of improvements; in 1498 he introduced the new procedure under which agreed customs were promulgated forthwith by the Royal Commissioners; and in the course of his reign he added seven general customs to the list of those published under the sanction of the Crown. Respectable though it was, however, the work of Charles VIII sinks into insignificance beside the achievement of Louis XII, for in the last ten years of Louis' reign more than twice as much was accomplished as had been done in the previous half-century, and in more than twenty-five important districts the customary law was codified or revised. Even so, much remained to be done in the next reign, and the work of codification, which it had been the ambition of Louis XII to finish, was still incomplete at his successor's death.

When its customs had been codified, the country found that its civil law had undergone a considerable modification. Customary law, once indeterminate and plastic, had become precise, stereotyped, and immobile. After codification a custom could no longer be modified by usage; having the same force as an ordinance, it could be changed only by an ordinance or in the process of a revision authorized by the Crown; and thus the Crown was found to have acquired a novel authority over the country's civil law. Desirable in many ways, precision and fixity turned out to be open to some objections. Its authors had supposed that codification would allay, if it did not wholly banish, the prevailing fever of litigiousness, but in this expectation they were doomed to encounter a grievous disappointment, for after codification there were more lawsuits than before. New difficulties took the place of the old, and proved to be less easy of solution, for society was now confronted by an official text of the law, which was new, which was often imperfect or obscure, and which necessarily lacked the aids to elucidation that are to be found in commentaries and in case-law. Moreover, the fixity resulting from codification tended to perpetuate antiquated laws and to set up a barrier to legislative progress. On the other hand, the processes of codification and

revision made for uniformity, and society stood to gain by any influence which lessened the chaotic diversity of local customs. It might also be claimed as an advantage that the practice of incorporating improvements on redaction and of removing defects on revision created a general inclination to make all customs conform to the best extant models. Imperfect as it may have been in some respects, and productive as it was of unforeseen results, the codification of an enormous mass of floating local customs was assuredly an enterprise redounding to the credit of the age which possessed the faith to inaugurate the Herculean task and the perseverance to carry it to completion. By historians it is respected as the greatest achievement of the old monarchy in the legislative sphere, and in the eyes of jurists it ranks as an achievement unique in history, beside which the compilations of Justinian's commissioners must be accounted an enterprise of secondary importance.

In the political theory of our own age legislative power occupies a place which would not have been accorded to it by past generations, who believed that the distinctive attributes of sovereignty were to be sought in another sphere. It was not when he legislated for the kingdom, nor when he ruled it, nor when he taxed it, but when he acted as its universal Justiciar that the King appeared to the contemporaries of Louis XII and Francis I most plainly to exercise an authority that was divine. Of this attribute, as of so many others, he had in large measure been deprived in feudal times, and the theory that all justice emanates from the Prince had found an imperfect expression in existing facts during the centuries in which seigneurial, municipal, and ecclesiastical jurisdictions had flourished alongside of, and to a large extent had ousted and eclipsed, the Royal courts. At the end of the fifteenth century the King must still share his judicial powers in some degree with feudal, municipal, and ecclesiastical authorities; but for a long time past the position of those authorities had been steadily impaired by the usurpations of *Baillis* and *Seneschals* from below and the encroachments of *Parlements* from above; the persistent efforts of legists to establish the Prince as the sole fountain of justice had resulted in the loss by non-

Royal jurisdictions of whole classes of business under the monopolist doctrines of *cas royaux*, *cas privilégiés*, and *prévention*, whilst their general subservience was secured by the paramount doctrine of appeals; and the King would not have put his power much too high, had he asserted that it was for him alone to judge and to punish, as it was for him alone to govern, to legislate, and to tax. Nowhere are the growth of the Royal power and the progress of centralization more clearly revealed than in the development of the country's judicial system upon lines which had gradually placed beyond question the supremacy of the Royal courts.

The system was one of immense complexity by reason, on the one hand, of the survival of innumerable ancient jurisdictions, and, on the other, of the creation of scarcely less numerous Royal courts. Complex as it was, however, it showed in no uncertain way an ever-increasing supremacy of Royal over non-Royal tribunals. Seigneurial justice had been definitely subordinated when rendered subject to a right of appeal, and its competence had been restricted decisively by the theory of *cas royaux*, which reserved for the King's courts all cases concerned with offences against the sovereign, against the public order, of which he was guardian, and against the ordinances, of which he was promulgator, thereby withdrawing from seigneurial arbitrament all civil and criminal cases of real importance. The decay of feudal justice was evidenced by the fate of seigneurial assizes, which were either suppressed entirely or were converted into provincial Parlements and so made cogs in the judicial machinery of the Crown. More marked still was the decline of municipal and ecclesiastical justice. In many towns the municipal tribunal had disappeared altogether; in those in which it survived it was subordinated and restricted by the invasive doctrines of *cas royaux* and appeals; and in the sixteenth century the business of a rather humble police-court usually represented the extent of municipal jurisdiction. The ecclesiastical courts, with more to lose, had fared even worse. A serious inroad upon their criminal jurisdiction was made when the theory of *cas privilégiés* handed over to the secular arm all clerks charged with offences against the public order, of which the King was guardian; their civil business was greatly reduced by a series of ordinances which transferred whole

blocks of it to the Royal courts; and the time had wellnigh come when their jurisdiction would be confined to the exercise of authority in spiritual matters alone.

The King's courts grew in numbers and gained in importance in proportion as their once formidable rivals declined. The ordinary or common law courts were the tribunals of the *Prévôts*, *Bayles*, and *Viguiers* at the base of the judicial ladder, those of the *Baillis* and Seneschals in the middle, and at the top the Parlement of Paris and the supreme courts which had been created in the provinces upon the same model. All had profited by the progress of Royal justice and the growth of the King's authority in the judicial sphere. By Francis I's time the court of the *Prévôt*, *Bayle*, and *Viguiers* had become the ordinary court of first instance for its locality, having supplanted municipal tribunals and acquired appellate jurisdiction over the lesser seigneurial courts. The noble, it is true, need not appear at its bar, but there the commoner was judged, subject to his right of appeal to the next superior court. This court was that of the *Bailli* or Seneschal, which had changed somewhat, as it grew. Once ambulatory, it had become stationary in the chief town of the district, and, once feudal, it had undergone radical changes in its composition by the elimination of the *Bailli* himself and of all feudal participants and by the substitution for them of a trained *Lieutenant* along with professional members, who acted as his assessors. Its jurisdiction, too, had been more precisely defined. The tribunal had become a court of first instance for Crown cases, demesne cases, and cases in which nobles or Royal officials or churches under Royal protection were involved, and it stood in the relation of an appeal court to all inferior courts in its area, whether Royal, seigneurial, or municipal. An appeal lay from it to the Parlement, whether central or provincial, which formed the highest common-law court, and in matters of administration and finance it was also subject to the control of the Council and of the revenue tribunals.

The change in composition which the *Bailli's* court underwent at the end of the fifteenth century was made with the approval of a people which failed to grasp its significance. In the Middle Ages France had been at one with England in the recognition of the principle that a man should be tried

by his peers, and the courts in which the representatives of the sovereign had sat with representatives of the people had been essentially democratic institutions, at least in so far as they were accessible to all and favourable to the preservation of local privileges and the maintenance of popular rights. Despite these merits, however, they had been rendered obnoxious by their defects, being costly, slow, inconvenient, and unreliable. They were costly, because a double burden was imposed upon a locality by the fact that a *Bailli* must be paid and his assistants must serve at their own charges. They were slow, because increasing judicial business and the ever-growing complexity of procedure and of law had overburdened machinery which was intermittent in its operation. They were inconvenient and uncertain, because they did not sit at fixed times and places or bring expert knowledge to the discharge of their duties. Their transformation was therefore approved by a nation which was weary of inexpert amateurs, desired technical competence in its judges, and did not appreciate the consequences which were certain to ensue, when a half-popular tribunal was handed over to a professional magistracy, appointed, paid, and controlled by the Crown. In conjunction with the decline of independent jurisdictions and the steady growth in numbers and in importance of the Royal courts, this radical change helped to hasten the advent of a time when judicial authority would take its place beside administrative, legislative, and fiscal power as an exclusive prerogative of the Crown.

The Parlements of France played a part in the national life which makes it necessary to give some account of them, but it will be convenient first to notice that the jurisdiction of the ordinary or common-law courts, of which the Parlements were the chief, was much restricted by the creation of many extraordinary and exceptional tribunals. The extraordinary courts were of two kinds, some dealing with special classes of business, others administering justice to special classes of persons. To the former kind belonged the Privy Council and the Grand Conseil, whose functions we have already considered, and also the revenue courts, consisting of *Chambres des Comptes*, *Cours des Aides*, and *Chambres des Monnaies*, whose activities may more suitably be described

when we inquire into the country's fiscal organization, of which they formed part. Of the courts for privileged persons the chief was the Court of Requests of the Hôtel. Most of these extraordinary courts were, or at any rate claimed to be, supreme and independent of the common-law courts. There were, however, other exceptional tribunals which were subordinated to the common-law system in so far as they were made subject to the appellate jurisdiction of the Parlements. Such were the special court of the Provost of Paris, the courts of the Conservators of University Privileges, and the courts, known as *Tables de Marbre*, in which the Constable, Marshals, Admiral, and Grand Maître des Eaux et Forêts exercised their special jurisdiction. The existence of these tribunals was due for the most part to one or other of two peculiarities of the medieval mind. In so far as they had been created to deal with special classes of persons, they were a product of the medieval predilection for privilege and exceptional treatment. In so far as they were concerned with special classes of business, they were the fruit of a curious inability to distinguish between different sorts of public powers. Detecting a necessary connexion between administrative or fiscal and judicial powers, the Middle Ages had entrusted both to the same hands, giving to every official a jurisdiction commensurate with his executive responsibility. Thus it was the revenue officials who adjudicated in tax cases, the mint officials who investigated coinage matters, the military authorities who dealt with the soldiery, and the forest officers, salt-monopoly officials, and so forth who administered justice in their special spheres. In the result, a very material reduction was made in the competence of the common-law courts. There was, however, an important respect in which these courts enjoyed an advantage over their rivals. An extraordinary or exceptional tribunal possessed no jurisdiction beyond the sphere in which it was specially commissioned to act. The competence of a common-law court was universal, and could be restricted only by express limitation.

The jurisdiction of the Court of Requests of the Hôtel originated in the custom of an earlier age, when the sovereign had been wont to administer justice in person, and had deemed it part of his kingly duty to be accessible to every subject who might desire to approach him with his suit or

his plea. When the patriarchal practice of a simpler age was abandoned, and the King no longer had time or inclination to 'sit in the gate', his place was taken by certain legal members of his entourage, who came to be known as Masters of Requests. To this tribunal came suitors desirous that the decision of some supreme court should be reviewed, and all the privileged persons, such as Household officers and civil servants, whom letters of *committimus* exempted from amenability to the common-law jurisdiction. The Court of Requests was thus at one time a connecting link, and at another a buffer, between the Council on the one hand and the Parlements and revenue courts on the other, and as such it had become a judicial institution of considerable importance. Disliked by the tribunals which were subjected to its authority, the Court of Requests was also unpopular with the public at large, whose members were liable to be summoned from distant places to plead at its bar and in so doing to subject themselves to the authority of judges in whose impartiality they reposed little faith.

The derogations from the powers of the ordinary courts, which formed so prominent a feature of the judicial system, were attributable in part to the doctrine of 'retained justice'—*la justice retenue*—which asserted the King's personal supremacy in the judicial sphere. According to this doctrine the King was the fountain of justice; in delegating authority to the Judiciary, he had not alienated it; he might therefore at will resume it or 'retain' it in his own hands; and upon such resumption or retention he could confer upon whom he pleased the right to judge whatsoever cases he might wish. In theory absolute, the sovereign's judicial authority was in practice restricted by rules and regulations which confined it to specific categories of acts, and from this restriction the chief features of *la justice retenue* were derived. The importance of the doctrine will be appreciated upon the reflection that it accounted for and was deemed to justify the judicial powers of the Privy Council, including its authority to settle disputes about jurisdiction between courts of co-ordinate sovereignty and to reverse the decisions of all courts, even of those otherwise supreme, for errors of fact or of law; the jurisdiction of the Grand Conseil and of the Court of Requests of the Hôtel; the system of evocations, which

withdrew particular causes or entire blocks of business from the cognizance of the ordinary courts; the conferring of the privilege of *committimus*, under which certain persons enjoyed the special favour of being amenable only to particular tribunals; and, last but not least, the power of assigning a particular cause to an extraordinary commission of persons specially designated for the purpose and appointed and empowered by Royal letters patent. Highly arbitrary in its nature, the last-named power had become justly suspect in its operation by reason of its employment by autocratic Princes in causes of a purely political complexion; a Venetian ambassador would presently declare that it was of a nature to prevent all opposition to the Royal will; and already the scandal of its abuse by Louis XI, in whose hands the extraordinary commission had become an instrument of judicial murder, had brought suspicion upon the whole body of Royal powers inherent in 'retained justice'. It was but too true that such powers as those of overriding the decisions of the supreme courts, withdrawing cases from their arbitrament, and exempting persons from their jurisdiction might be used unscrupulously to further the ends of the Crown or to promote the interests of Royal *protégés*. Whilst capable of abuse, however, the powers were not without their legitimate uses in behalf of litigants aggrieved by a miscarriage of justice or endangered by judicial prejudice or partiality. The privilege of *committimus*, which exempted Princes, dukes and peers, judges, civil servants, Household officials, and some other classes from liability to the common-law jurisdiction, was defended upon the ground that public servants ought not to be withdrawn from the scene of their labours, and, in so far as that ground was the true reason for a grant, it might be deemed not wholly indefensible.

That the doctrine of 'retained justice' and its practical consequences were disliked by the nation is shown by the attitude of the States-General, whose view may be taken as a true reflection of popular opinion. The States denounced extraordinary commissions, declaring that they had become mere instruments of Royal vengeance, and ought to be abolished. They complained of evocations, saying that at the best they imposed a crushing expense upon litigants living in the more distant parts of the kingdom, and at the worst

were a device for enabling influential suitors to defeat justice. They objected to the serious interference with the ordinary course of law resulting from the jurisdiction of the Court of Requests and of the military and administrative tribunals. They declared, generally, that the course of justice was impeded by numerous abuses, of which they demanded the suppression, pointing in particular to the *lettres de grâce* which a man must have before he could initiate proceedings and the *lettres de justice* which he must obtain before he could lodge an appeal. It is only when the doors of access are kept open, they said, that justice may be found.

These were not the only popular grievances, for to the abuses which the States denounced were added an uncertainty and complexity which caused the judicial system to become the subject of incessant complaint. Not only were the exceptional tribunals far too numerous, but their jurisdiction was also defined with far too little precision. That this should result in their being perpetually engaged in squabbles among themselves or with the common-law courts was bad enough, but it was much worse from the suitor's point of view that he could never be sure in which court he should initiate proceedings, and, were he to go to the wrong one, he would certainly incur useless expense and might not improbably find himself non-suited. He was also likely to suffer from the excessive elaboration of the appeal machinery: in cases of trifling importance there might be as many as four steps; and when it was in a seigneurial court that the proceedings originated, there might be a succession of appeals from the feudal *Prévôt* to the feudal *Bailli*, from him to the Royal *Prévôt*, then to the Royal *Bailli* or Seneschal, from him to the Parlement, which first investigated in committee and then adjudicated in plenary session, and finally from the Parlement to the Privy Council or Grand Conseil. No less vexatious were the complications and uncertainty of procedure, for each tribunal had its own rules, and there were few that did not necessitate a mass of legal papers, the prosecution of elaborate inquiries, and a laborious preparation and presentation of evidence. It was an inevitable consequence that costs should mount sky-high and suits drag on to an interminable length, so that a Venetian ambassador could speak of a case about a thousand *écus* costing two

thousand and lasting ten years, and the statute-book itself could admit the confession that suits at law were grown 'immortal'. In such conditions it was inevitable that a swarm of legal harpies should lie in wait for the man who had the misfortune to become involved, or the temerity to engage, in litigation. Not only were there recorders and proctors in every court and advocates in every town, but there were even notaries in every village, for it was chiefly upon the peasant that the notary lived, drafting his contracts, of which each required two notarial attestations. Advocates were so numerous that many were obliged to eke out inadequate professional emoluments with the less respectable, but often more substantial, profits of a shop or a tavern. As a class, they were bumptious, ignorant, and greedy, but contrived by audacity and glibness to impose upon their clients, and so to contribute to the ruin which menaced all who became enmeshed in the toils of the law. Little as it daunted the men of the time, that danger was real enough. 'A man had to pay to get his case put down for hearing, pay to get it heard, pay to have a copy of the judgement, pay when he lost, pay when he won, pay when he went into prison, pay when he came out again—in a word, he had to purchase justice, the thing which above all others the State should dispense free to all its subjects.'¹

In Francis I's reign a seigneur who had the welfare of his province at heart thought that the time had come when an effort should be made to purge it of its plague of notaries, and the King supported him on the ground that the number of those parasites had become intolerable, and that, as most of them were poor and illiterate, they added to the burden of the district by an incompetence which provoked and multiplied disputes. It does not appear that any great results were achieved by the reformers' zeal, and a contemporary satirist believed that for such an ill the remedy was like to prove worse than the disease. There was once a beggar, he said, who displayed his sores in the streets, and the flies drank deep of his blood. A kindly passer-by drove off the flies, thinking that he would thereby give the beggar relief. But the beggar grew angry and said to him: 'Those flies had long battened upon me, and for the time being were so sated with

¹ Martin, *Histoire de France*, vol. vii, p. 308.

my blood that they bit no more. Now that you have driven them off, others will come and take their places, and these, being hungry, will bite ravenously. In trying to do me a service, you have done me much harm.’¹

Benvenuto Cellini, who found his way into a French law-court in Francis I’s time, has left us an entertaining account of his experiences. ‘It happened’, he writes, ‘that just at this period an action was brought against me in Paris by the second lodger I had ousted from my castle, who pretended that on that occasion I had stolen a large quantity of his effects. This lawsuit tormented me beyond measure, and took up so much of my time that I often thought of decamping in despair from the country. Now the French are in the habit of making much capital out of any action they commence against a foreigner or against such persons as they notice to be indolent in litigation. No sooner do they observe that they are getting some advantage in the suit, than they find the means to sell it; some have even been known to give a lawsuit in dowry with their daughters to men who make a business out of such transactions. They have another ugly custom, which is that the Normans, nearly all of them, traffic in false evidence; so that the men who buy up lawsuits engage at once the services of four or six of these false witnesses, according to their need; their adversary, if he neglect to produce as many on the other side, being perhaps unacquainted with the custom, is certain to have the verdict given against him.

‘All this happened in my case, and thinking it a most disgraceful breach of justice, I made my appearance in the great hall of Paris, to defend my right. There I saw a judge, lieutenant for the King in civil causes, enthroned upon a high tribunal. He was tall, stout, and fat, and of an extremely severe countenance. All round him on each side stood a crowd of solicitors and advocates, ranged upon the right hand and the left. Others were coming, one by one, to explain their several causes to the judge. From time to time, too, I noticed that the attorneys at the side of the tribunal talked all at once; and much admiration was roused in me by that extraordinary man, the very image of Pluto, who

¹ Gringore, *Œuvres complètes*, ed. C. d’Héricault and A. de Montaignon, vol. i, pp. 43-5.

listened with marked attention first to one and then to the other, answering each with learning and sagacity. . . . The hall being very large, and filled with a multitude of folk, they were strict in excluding every one who had no business there, and kept the door shut with a guard to hold it.¹

The suppression of judicial abuses and the removal of defects in the administration of the law were objects to which the Government of France devoted much attention during the period which elapsed between the death of Louis XI and the accession of Francis I. The two Rocheforts, who held the Chancellorship in succession under Charles VIII, and Georges d'Amboise, who inspired the policy of the Crown under Louis XII, were equally alive to the need of the nation for competence and impartiality in its judges, reasonable dispatch in judicial proceedings, simplification of procedure, and a reduction in legal costs. Something had already been done by the reforming ordinances of 1490 and 1493 when Louis XII and d'Amboise determined to signalize the beginning of a new reign by an ambitious programme of radical reform. In March 1499 a great ordinance in one hundred and sixty-two sections gave legislative effect to the recommendations of an assembly which had been summoned to Blois to review the entire field, and in 1510 a second ordinance put finishing touches to the whole. The result was a general improvement in the administration of justice which ranks with the codification of the customary law as one of the great achievements of the age and one of the most valuable services ever rendered by Crown to people. The beneficent effect was the greater, because litigiousness had become a national vice. Though strong Governments had brought peace to the country, they had not yet been able to instil in the hearts of the people any true respect for peaceful ways, and pugnacity survived as an hereditary instinct with a generation which was heir to an age-long tradition of violence and warfare. Deprived of the gratification which had once been afforded by public wars, private combats, and the other fierce pursuits of lawless men, the love of strife sought satisfaction in legal contention and the battles of the courts. Seigneurs spent their lives in litigation with each other or with neighbouring towns;

¹ Benvenuto Cellini, *Vita*, trans. J. A. Symonds, 1911 edit., pp. 306-7.

the endless disputes of the craft guilds were treasured as a sort of corporate heirloom; the issue of a writ became the normal sequel to a commercial transaction between members of the burgher class; and even the humble peasant would permit himself the luxury of legal proceedings about the boundaries of his holding or the sale of his pigs. To most men life would have seemed empty and meaningless without the interest and excitement afforded by the pursuit of some cherished legal vendetta. The Rocheforts, d'Amboise, and Louis XII knew this, and it was that knowledge which inspired their zeal for legal and judicial reform.

Whatever may be said of it, their programme must at least be allowed to have exhibited courage, for all the difficulties were squarely faced. In the organization of the Grand Conseil as a supreme judicial and administrative tribunal an effort was made to secure the much-needed unity of control. The conversion of the higher revenue courts into supreme courts, and the divorce of judicial from fiscal powers and duties among subordinate officials, substituted order for chaos in a region of ill-defined powers. Measures were taken to lessen the law's interminable delays: courts were ordered to sit regularly; judges were bidden to attend; procedure was simplified; brevity was enjoined upon the Bar; and dilatoriness was forbidden to the Bench. The expense of litigation was dealt with by a reduction in costs, a standardizing of the scale of fees, and a limitation of the remuneration of counsel. Economy and purity alike gained by the prohibition of the clandestine presents to judges which had become a crying scandal, occupants of the Bench being ordered to accept from litigants nothing beyond the small attentions which custom condoned under the name of *épices*. In the lower courts the standard of competence among persons appointed to magisterial office was raised by the new rule which required that the *Lieutenant*, or judicial deputy of the *Bailli* or Seneschal, should be chosen among holders of a degree in law, for this had the effect of eliminating the amateur. That these changes should have yielded some happy results in the civil courts may readily be believed. The great Ordinance of Blois did not, indeed, make the administration of justice so simple, quick, cheap, and pure that no further improvement could be desired; but it did produce results

for which contemporaries had good reason to be grateful; and one of Louis XII's Law Officers was able to boast to the Grand Conseil that in no country of Europe was justice administered more efficiently, more economically, or with greater fairness as between high-born and low or rich and poor.¹

Reforming zeal did not ignore the criminal law and its administration. The field was one in which there was scope for improvement, for under the standing menace of violence and disorder medieval society had evolved a pitiless criminal law, and was wont to apply it with callous indifference to aught but the need for self-preservation. The code was cruel; procedure was summary and secret; to be accused was to be condemned; and to be condemned was to experience the manifold rigours of a brutal penal system. By the end of the fifteenth century, however, France was moving towards a better social state, and a progressive refinement of manners approved the more humane treatment of the criminal which the increasing security of life and property appeared at once to justify and to demand. This aspect of judicial reform produced some notable changes in the attitude of society towards the malefactor and in the measures which it thought fit to adopt for its own protection. It was recognized that an accused person possessed some rights. It was decreed that he should not be arrested without warrant, that he should not be put upon his trial without formal indictment, that he should have a right to be present when evidence for the prosecution was taken, and that he should be entitled to be heard in his own defence. These were notable safeguards for all occupants of a criminal dock, and as accused persons were drawn from the less educated sections of the people, they were benefited even more by a provision that the vernacular should be substituted for Latin in all the stages of a criminal trial. The steps taken to improve the criminal law pointed to the gradual formation of an idea that the punishment and prevention of crime were matters best dealt with by public servants in the public interest. It was true that torture and other ugly features of a Draconian code continued to disfigure the statute-book, but precise restrictions were imposed upon their use, and the Crown

¹ Imbart de la Tour, *Les Origines de la Réforme*, vol. i, p. 187.

in the exercise of its prerogative of mercy habitually waived the harsher penalties which conservatism had hesitated to abolish, but progress scrupled to inflict.

Most reforms arouse selfish opposition: those of Louis XII and his advisers encountered it in the place in which an enlightened policy ought most surely to have elicited a ready response. A review of the judicial field had revealed the fact that justice was constantly impeded by the privileges of the University of Paris, which were in themselves exorbitant, and were made more noxious by frequent abuse. Universities had established a custom under which all cases concerning their members, whether graduate or undergraduate, were assigned to special tribunals, which were known as the courts of the Conservators of University Privileges. The position would have been anomalous enough, if the ordinary courts had merely been deprived of jurisdiction in all suits in which genuine members of a University were properly concerned; but in Paris at all events the thing went much farther than that, for thousands of persons were permitted to set up a bogus claim to undergraduate status, which enabled them to defeat the course of justice, not only in cases in which they themselves became involved, but in many others also in which legal ingenuity contrived to add them as parties. The reforming ordinance dealt with this abuse, decreeing that a University student should be added as a party only upon the double proof of genuine student status and of substantial interest in the suit. When the University of Paris heard of this abrogation of its privileges, a violent storm broke out: Rector, Doctors, Masters, and undergraduates prepared to resist by any and every means; the students flew to arms; the Rector ordered a cessation of preaching and teaching; and a monstrous proposal for withholding medical attention from the sick of the capital was solemnly debated. At this juncture the Chancellor returned to Paris, and that night a sketch of a heart transfixed by a dagger was nailed to his door, to indicate the fate which he might expect at the hands of the student mob. In this temper, and with its spiritual powers, great prestige, and formidable force of bellicose youth, the University was not a foe to be despised. The King and his ministers stood firm, however, for d'Amboise was not a man whom it was easy to intimidate, and beneath

the *bonhomie* which was to make the King the idol of his people there lurked a touch of the autocratic temper which resistance tends merely to stiffen. Moreover, the Government knew that they had behind them the popular opinion of the capital, whose legal rights were prejudiced by University privilege, and whose peace was a frequent victim on the altar of student licence. Representatives of the University were coldly received at Court, and were sternly bidden to put their house in order; as a step to that end Jean Standonc, a preacher who had counselled resistance, was banished from the kingdom; and his colleague, the well-known Olivier Maillard, thought it prudent to escape punishment by flight. The University then submitted, and made its peace with the King.

So ended the attempt of the University to defend its privilege against the Crown, and it may be that the story of this abortive rebellion was in Machiavelli's mind when he declared that respect for the law was conspicuous among the national characteristics of the French. Familiar with those characteristics after more than one sojourn in the kingdom, he formed the considered judgement that in no other country was the rule of law established more firmly, and this circumstance he attributed primarily to the influence of the Parlements, and in particular to the authority of the Parlement of Paris, which stood at their head. With an estimate of the part which this great institution played in the national life we may conclude our review of the judicial organization of the country.

As we have already seen in tracing the origins of the Council, the Parlement of Paris had become detached from the *curia regis* when a growing pressure of business had imposed upon that body the need for a division of labour. In the early days of Capetian powerlessness the *curia regis* had contrived without inconvenience to discharge the varied duties which had fallen to its share in the political, financial, judicial, and administrative spheres; but as the influence of the Crown had increased, those duties had become more numerous and more onerous, and the technical business of the Court had begun more and more to exceed the limited capacity of a general assembly of feudal vassals and Household officers. Thus, to take but one instance, appeals had

become so numerous by the middle of the thirteenth century that special sessions had then to be devoted to them. Under St. Louis matters were carried a step farther, and a definite division was made between administrative and judicial work. The *curia regis* had no fixed meeting-place or regular sessions; it followed the King, met wherever he chanced to be, and sat as circumstances required. St. Louis saw that some more systematized arrangement was desirable to enable the court to fulfil the new duties which changing conditions were imposing upon it, and he accordingly detached two sections from the main body, entrusting financial control to the one and judicial business to the other. Both these bodies ceased to wander about in the King's entourage, abandoned the primitive system of haphazard meetings, and were freed from the incubus of a miscellaneous programme of work; settled in Paris, with regular sittings and fixed vacations, each was enabled to devote itself exclusively to its own special functions. The financial section would be known as the *Chambre des Comptes* and the judicial as the *Parlement of Paris*.

The primitive composition of the judicial section was also modified at this period, though the *Parlement* would long retain traces of its origin in the *curia regis*, which had contained feudal barons, Royal officials, and professional experts. The Royal officials had consisted for the most part of the King's executive agents, the *Baillis* and Seneschals, whom it was the practice to summon either to profit by their presence in the conduct of business which concerned them or to communicate to them in person the King's instructions, and this element had been eliminated when at the beginning of the fourteenth century the *Bailli* had become a local functionary with the consequent loss of his seat in the central council. For various reasons, but chiefly through their disinclination for technical work and inability to perform it, the prelates and barons had dropped out about the same time, except for the comparatively rare attendance of peers in peerage cases; and thus it had come about that the new court was left in the hands of the professional element, which was composed of *Magistri tenentes Parlamentum*, or *Maîtres* designated by the King.

The constitution of the tribunal was settled by the

legislation of the year 1345. Thenceforward the Parlement consisted of three Chambers, the Grand'Chambre, of which the Tournelle, or Criminal Court, was a section, the Chambre des Enquêtes, and the Chambre des Requêtes. Of these the Grand'Chambre enjoyed, as its name implies, a position of pre-eminent superiority. It was this Chamber, itself not infrequently styled the Parlement, which represented the unity of the Parlement and embodied the majesty of the law. Here the sovereign held his solemn sessions, here the peers and great seigneurs sat, and here the Great Officers and chief officials were sworn in. Through the Grand'Chambre the Parlement exercised its extensive general jurisdiction, and through the same Chamber it exerted its power in the political and administrative spheres.

It was also by a delegation of the Grand'Chambre that the jurisdiction of the Parlement in criminal matters was exercised. As originally constituted, the Parlement had contained no special court for the trial of criminal cases, but the omission had been remedied in practice by assigning that duty to a Commission composed of lay members of the Grand'Chambre. This Commission had been installed in a small tower which formed part of the Palais and was called the Tournelle Saint Louis, and, like the Court of Star Chamber in England, the tribunal borrowed a name from the scene of its labours. As a mere delegation, the Tournelle had originally filled a rather humble role; grave cases were withheld from it, and, in such cases as it did hear, it did not itself pass sentence, but merely reported to the Grand'Chambre, by which judgement was delivered. Upon the reorganization of the Parlement under Charles VII the authority of the Tournelle had been somewhat extended, but it had not then ceased to be a delegation or acquired an independent status. That status it was now about to possess, however, for one of the first acts of the new reign would be the establishment of the Tournelle as a separate and independent criminal court with jurisdiction in all criminal cases, except such as were expressly reserved for the decision of the Grand'Chambre, and with power to pass sentence at its own bar. The Grand'Chambre continued to deliver judgement in treason cases and in cases concerning clerks, gentlemen, and State officials.

Like the Tournelle Criminelle, the Chambre des Enquêtes had been brought into existence at the beginning of the fourteenth century as an auxiliary to the Grand'Chambre. Since much of the business of the Parlement necessitated local inquiries and the collection of evidence on the spot, it was found convenient to have a judicial body whose members could be dispatched to the provinces to perform functions akin to the process known in modern language as taking evidence on commission. The procedure of the Chamber was adapted to this purpose. The commissioner entrusted with the conduct of a local inquiry embodied the results of his investigations in a written statement, which, together with such documentary evidence as he had been able to collect, he handed upon his return to the Registrar of the Chamber; the documents were then issued by the Registrar to other members of the Chamber known as *Rapporteurs*; and, after submitting them to judicial scrutiny, the *Rapporteurs* handed them back, accompanied by statements of the conclusions at which they had arrived. In cases where complex questions of law were involved or specially important interests were at stake, the conclusions of the *Rapporteurs* were subjected to discussion and amendment by the assembled Chamber; subject thereto, they were communicated to the parties as the judgement of the court. All the judgements of the Chambre des Enquêtes were liable to revision in the Grand'Chambre, to which any particular cause might also be remitted by the King; but the inferior Chamber exercised jurisdiction in nearly all cases which did not depend upon oral evidence, and there thus came within its purview numerous appeals by way of special case from the provincial courts of the kingdom. It is worthy of remark that the Chambre des Enquêtes was a court of investigation only: it is a somewhat curious feature of its procedure that no pleaders ever appeared at its bar, and that it never came directly into contact with the litigants whose disputes it determined.

The remaining section of the Parlement may be dismissed with a brief allusion. When he had abandoned the primitive practice of sitting personally 'in the gate', the King had appointed certain professional members of the *curia regis* to receive petitions addressed to him; and when the *curia*

regis was split into sections, some of these had been attached to the Council as *Maîtres des Requêtes* of the Hôtel and some to the Parlement as *Maîtres des Requêtes* of the Palais de Justice. The latter formed a special Chamber of the Parlement, but, like the *Maîtres des Enquêtes*, they were originally regarded as mere delegates of the Grand' Chambre, and only gradually had won their way to a position of quasi-independence. Their duty was to examine the humble petitions of those who addressed themselves to the sovereign as the fountain of justice, to hear the suits of persons and corporations whom the privilege of *committimus* made specially amenable to the jurisdiction of the Parlement, and to issue the *lettres de justice* which every would-be litigant must obtain. Like other sections of the Parlement, the Chambre des Requêtes would occasionally be deprived of some part of its jurisdiction by an exercise of the Royal power of evocation, and all its decisions were subject to review at the hands of its superior, the Grand'Chambre.

The personnel of the Parlement was undergoing notable changes in methods of recruitment and in status. At one time the members of the supreme court had been chosen by the King; then the judges had co-opted their colleagues subject to Royal approval. Since the middle of the fifteenth century a combination of the two earlier systems had been in force, the Parlement nominating three candidates, of whom the Crown appointed one. In the main this compromise had been respected by the Crown, which more than once had accorded express recognition to the electoral rights of the Chambers; but there had been occasions when Kings had departed from the customary procedure, and even in the reigns of such easy-going monarchs as Charles VIII and Louis XII the Parlement had seen its rights flouted by the appointment of a candidate whom it had not nominated or by the promise of a prospective appointment before a vacancy had arisen. At the same time the Parlement itself was lending its sanction to the growth of a new practice in the filling of judicial posts by permitting a Councillor to retire and nominate his successor. Resignation, as the new practice was called, was copied from the custom of resigning ecclesiastical benefices in favour of a nominee which the Canon law permitted and churchmen had long followed; and its

application to lay posts was favoured by the feudal theory that an office was a piece of property like an estate, and that, like an estate, it might be alienated at the pleasure of the holder. Applied to judicial offices from the beginning of the fifteenth century, it was growing in favour, and had operated in more than one-half of the judicial vacancies which had occurred during the reign of Charles VIII.

The system worked in this way. A Councillor announced that he wished to retire, and submitted the name of a successor for approval; an inquiry was ordered by the Parlement; and, if the result of it proved satisfactory—if the resignation had been prompted by no sordid motives, and the nominee was a fit and proper person to receive preferment—he was admitted without election. The process was usually carried through in favour of a son or other near relative, but the retiring Councillor would sometimes place his resignation in the hands of the King or the Chancellor, and leave it to them to select a successor. When this happened, the influence of Royal favourites was likely to make itself felt, and that influence was usually corrupt. Though traffic in offices was forbidden under sharp penalties, the insidious evil was a thing which it was easier to denounce than to arrest. Under Louis XII more than one case of suspension or deposition is recorded. In 1503 the reception of Maître Jacques Mesnager as a *Conseiller clerc* was suspended because his cousin, a tradesman at Tours, had presented the Queen with a valuable ring, and the candidate had been privy to the proceeding. Ten years later, on the nomination of a certain Jean Hennequin, a different and more subtle problem arose. Hennequin presented his papers, and took the required oath that he had not purchased preferment by any gifts or promises; but, being of a nice conscience, he qualified his declaration by confessing that he was about to contract a marriage upon which he had entered in the hope that it would facilitate his reception. His story was as follows. He had begged a friend, a member of the Parlement, to find him a wife, stipulating that she should be of a fair name and of a respectable family, and 'likely to bring him a billet as Councillor'. The friend, having considered the matter, had suggested a young lady who added to her other attractions a dowry of 3,000 *écus* and a family connexion with the Sire

de Montdragon, who enjoyed much influence with the Queen. Viewing these qualifications with favour, Hennequin had allowed the marriage to be arranged without more ado; Montdragon had used his influence in favour of his prospective kinsman; and so a question had arisen to trouble the conscience of the bridegroom and to perplex the judgment of the Parlement. The irregularity, if any there were, that august body decided that it would overlook, and Hennequin was permitted to take his seat. He would have been hardly used, perhaps, had the decision been adverse, for his offence was venial, compared with the things that were to come.

One innovation will sometimes lead to another, and a minor abuse produce a major evil. So it was with the system of resignations, which suggested to the Crown the possibility of a new fiscal expedient. If offices were to be dealt in, why should not the Crown create new ones and the Treasury get the advantage? Once envisaged as a possibility by kings who were short of cash, the sale of offices was certain to be included in the list of money-making devices, and the time was at hand when nearly all offices, judicial, financial, and administrative, would be conferred openly by Francis I for cash considerations. Francis, it is true, would profess to maintain the earlier prohibitions which had declared the sale of judicial offices to be illegal; but he would do so merely as a concession to the proprieties, and would evade its inconvenient consequences by taking his purchase-price under the thin disguise of a loan. With the establishment of the Bureau des Parties Casuelles in 1522 even that pretence would be given up, for the Bureau, as Loyseau said of it, was nothing but a shop for trading in a new sort of merchandise.

The results were far-reaching and for the most part regrettable. The most objectionable feature of the system was the temptation which it presented to an impecunious king to create useless posts for the sake of gain. A part of the cost of Louis XII's Italian campaigns had been defrayed by the creation and sale of new posts in the revenue service. His successor would profit by the example to physic a sick Treasury with the same tonic, and would do so with a lavish hand. In his reign all would be grist that the public service could

bring to the fiscal mill: nearly all judicial offices would become venal; new judgeships would be made and sold; minor posts would be increased in dignity, to command a larger price; and the system would be carried so far that there would be wholesale creations of new and superfluous Chambers, such as an additional *Chambre des Enquêtes*, created in 1523, a special Chamber for the *demesne*, set up in 1531, and a second *Tournelle*, brought into being in 1543. Offices, said a Venetian ambassador at the close of the reign, were innumerable, and every day increased in number, although there were twice as many already as were required to meet every legitimate need.

Under this system a worse injury was done to the country than the mere burdening of it with useless officials, though that was bad enough. With the experience of a century to guide him, Loyseau would declare that 'nothing is more contrary to reason than the traffic in offices, which takes account of money rather than of probity in the very sphere in which probity is most to be desired and corruption most to be abhorred: for, if the applicant deserve his post, there is no reason why he should buy it, and, if he deserve it not, there is still less reason why it should be sold to him'.¹ Sir Thomas More had prophesied truly when he had written in his *Utopia* of the results likely to follow when places are bought and sold, how offices would be given to rich men which should rather have been executed of wise men, and how occasion would be given to the purchasers to gather up their money again by ravin and fraud. So long ago as Louis XI's time, when venality was in its infancy—and that infancy the youth of an unacknowledged child of shame—Commynes had noticed that large sums would be given for posts that were paid meagrely or not at all, because the purchaser meant to get from his job as much as ever it could be made to yield.² Salary was no true guide to the value of a post when the holder looked for his return, not so much to his pay, which was usually small, as to the indirect rewards in honorariums, perquisites, and privileges, of which the amount would depend, at least in part, upon his own ingenuity in extortion. Undesirable in every civil relation, this

¹ Loyseau, *Du droit des offices*, preface.

² *Mémoires*; ed. B. de Mandrot, vol. i, p. 56.

method of remuneration was especially obnoxious in the spheres of taxation and justice. In the judicial sphere the door to corruption was already held more than half open by the ancient practice of giving small presents to the occupants of the Bench. These presents, called *épices* from the thirst-inducing dessert fruits of which they had once consisted, were excused by the meagreness of judicial salaries, and were thought to be free from the taint of corruption, because they were given when the proceedings were over and after judgement had been pronounced; but the system was essentially vicious, and was not likely to endure for long in a state of primitive innocency. Authority had seen this, and had frowned upon it; an attempt to abolish *épices* had been made by Charles VIII, and the acceptance by judges of any kind of present forbidden by the great Ordinance of Blois; but custom had proved stronger than the law, and with the introduction of venality the influence of a new abuse came to reinforce the hold of the old upon the morals of the Parlement.

Denounced by States-General, condemned by moralists, and deplored by all who cherished the ideal of impartial justice and economical administration, venality had its friends, for to nearly every class of society it offered a tempting prospect. Few members of the lesser nobility were affluent enough to spurn the hope of a lucrative job, whilst the upper middle class welcomed the opportunity to place its feet upon a ladder which would lead with certainty to position, power, and comfort, and might not improbably prove a means of access to rank and wealth. A notable characteristic of the period is the passion for public posts¹ which seized upon all sections of educated society, enabling functionarism to establish itself in the national manners, with important social and political results. Social divisions were

¹ 'Tels de ces offices étaient convoités avec une sauvagerie à peine dissimulée. On épiait les moindres maladies des officiers en place: les traîtrises de leur goutte, de leur intestin, de leur foie, de leurs poumons, de leur cerveau. On apostait auprès d'eux quelque serviteur, pour suivre le déclin de leur santé, le détail de leurs rechutes, les derniers sursauts de leur agonie. Dans la nuit, dans la neige, dans la boue, à proximité du logis des moribonds, on attendait, le cœur battant, la nouvelle de leur fin, pour courir éveiller quelques secrétaires du roi gagnés d'avance, pénétrer auprès du souverain avant tout autre et obtenir le don de l'office convoité': Dupont-Ferrier, *Études sur les institutions financières de la France à la fin du moyen âge*, vol. i, p. 194.

multiplied, capital was withdrawn from productive employment, the producing class was depressed in the social scale, and the centralizing and absolutist tendencies of the Crown were encouraged by the growth of a bureaucracy which played for its own hand in fighting the Royal battles, and sought a personal as well as a professional triumph in the overthrow of popular liberties and the suppression of every vestige of independence.¹

Nevertheless, there were a few gains to set against the many undeniable drawbacks. Foremost among the good results must be reckoned the security of tenure given to judges whose position had hitherto been insecure. Louis XI had, indeed, promised that he would make appointments to judgeships only when there should be a vacancy legitimately occasioned by death, resignation, or legal forfeiture; but he had not observed his own undertaking, and the shadow of arbitrary dismissal had hung darkly over the Judicial Bench. This shadow the introduction of venality dispersed, since equity demanded that no man should be arbitrarily evicted from a place which he had bought for cash. To sell a man his place was thus to invest the place with permanence and to confer upon its occupant an independence which he would not otherwise have enjoyed. Upon the solid basis of this independence the structure of the Parlement's political power was to be raised, and in the shelter of that structure the Judiciary would be enabled to entrench itself against the incessant encroachments of autocracy. Moreover, a system which seemed designed to give to wealth a preference over merit operated in practice to found the eminent legal families which performed the inestimable service of preserving from generation to generation a great tradition of learning, probity, and public spirit. 'Despite their tainted origin, most of these Parlement-men not only shed lustre upon their profession, but also by their integrity and public spirit rendered most valuable service to the State. Under influences somewhat chill and austere there grew up dynasties of hereditary magistrates, accustomed from childhood to seriousness of purpose, to sustained mental effort, to the industry so plainly required by the duties to which they

¹ Lavissee, *Histoire de France*, vol. v (i), p. 251; Dupont-Ferrier, *Formation de l'État*, pp. 201-3.

were destined; men of manly and vigorous personalities, rich in the inherited virtues of their class, imbued with love of their profession, fearless in their devotion to duty, determined to uphold both their own independence and that of the Judicial Bench upon which they served. Its great and good magistracy is the chief ornament of the *ancien régime*.¹

So much for the personnel of the Parlement. We must return now to the subject of its jurisdiction and of the role which it filled in the judicial organization of the country. As the mandatory of the King, who was the fountain of justice, and as the heir of the *Cour du Roi*, to whose authority no bounds had been set, the Parlement wielded extensive powers. As a court of first instance it enjoyed an exclusive jurisdiction in causes which affected Princes of the Blood or Great Officers or touched the persons or interests of peers of the realm, and it also took cognizance of all the matters, growing daily in numbers and importance, which came within the designation of *cas royaux*. In this elastic category was included every sort of case that could be thought to affect the King in his person, or in his authority, or in his domanial or pecuniary rights. It thus comprised the crime of high treason, which was an injury to the King's authority; all offences against the public peace, of which the King was guardian; all acts of violence committed on the public roads, since the highways were the King's; such crimes as false coining, forgery, and perjury, and such matters as regalian suits, since they affected the King's pecuniary interests or threatened the purity of his justice; and all causes in which those who were under his Royal safeguard were concerned. As an appellate tribunal the Parlement reviewed the judgments of all lesser Royal courts; it heard appeals from the Châtelet, the Mint, the University courts, the Table de Marbre, and the higher seigneurial tribunals known as Grands Jours;² and it even put forth a pretension, frequently denounced, but never abandoned, to control all the courts of the kingdom, including those which laid claim to sovereign power. As an ecclesiastical tribunal it had been deprived

¹ Gasquet, *Institutions politiques*, vol. i, p. 279.

² The name was also given to the assizes which the Parlement itself held in the provinces.

by Royal evocation of some part of its jurisdiction when it had quarrelled with Louis XI over the maintenance of the Pragmatic Sanction of Bourges. It still took cognizance, however, of all such regalian matters as were deemed to be *cas royaux*; it investigated charges of magic, sorcery, and witchcraft; and it intervened in heresy cases and other purely spiritual causes in connexion with the temporal penalties to be inflicted upon the guilty.

The mass of judicial business with which the Parlement was called upon to deal was far from constituting the sole claim upon its activities, for varied and onerous duties fell to its share both in the administrative and in the political sphere. If bad justice was detrimental to the authority of the sovereign, so was bad administration prejudicial to his interests; and the Parlement, as the guardian of the Royal weal, was charged with the supervision of the one no less than with the control of the other. All grants of offices under the Crown were enrolled by the Grand'Chambre, and the oaths of loyalty and faithful service were there administered to all the officers of State. Over many of the lesser Royal agents it exercised a vigilant control. The *Baillis* and Seneschals were subject as judges to its authority and as administrators to its supervision: their actions were exposed to its criticism, their leave of absence depended upon its favour, their districts were maintained, enlarged, or contracted at its bidding. In relation to education it enrolled the privileges, controlled the discipline, determined the curricula, and licensed the teachers of the Universities. In relation to industry and commerce it settled hours of work and rates of pay; it formulated mercantile by-laws; it possessed an exclusive authority to sanction the establishment of new markets; it registered grants of mining rights made by the Chambre des Comptes; and, as part of its responsibility for the policing of the rivers and seas, it granted letters of marque to privateers. In relation to the city of Paris, in which its sessions were held, its duties were far-reaching, for not only did it control the Court of the Châtelet, but the Provost also was subject to its supervision, and the municipal government was carried on under its direction: it thus became responsible for such diverse matters as the audit of the city accounts; the upkeep of streets, highways, and

monuments; the defence and policing of the city; the administration of its hospitals and charitable institutions; sanitation and the prevention of infectious disorders; theatrical licensing; and the regulation of vice. The provisioning of the capital—ensuring an adequate supply, at reasonable prices, of bread, meat, fish, and salt—had long been the subject of its anxious concern; and although by the end of the fifteenth century the Grand Pannetier had relieved it of some part of its responsibility, problems of prices and supply might still demand an occasional intervention. In relation to the Church its powers were as considerable, and its duties no less varied. Incumbents who neglected to pay national or municipal taxes were reminded by the Parlement of their omission, and they were soon taught that there was an authority ever on the watch to see that they administered Church property judiciously and kept the fabrics of their sacred edifices in repair. Religious communities found that upon them, too, the same observant eye was fixed; the Parlement supervised their privileges, controlled their acquisitions, inquired into their moral condition, and undertook, when circumstances demanded it, the administration of their material resources. Bishops who attempted to abuse the awful power of excommunication with which the Church had entrusted them, found in the Parlement a strenuous foe, for although it knew how to respect a sentence of excommunication when founded upon justice, it was determined that spiritual weapons should not be employed as means of extortion or as instruments of tyranny. Nor had it shrunk, when the interests of the State had demanded it, from incurring the enmity of powers still more august, and the Gallican Church had never failed to find in the Parlement a firm defence alike against Royal ambition and against Papal greed.

In the years which preceded Francis I's accession the Parlement of Paris had seen its authority threatened by the rise of provincial Parlements which had marked the second half of the fifteenth century. This development had been brought about by various causes. To begin with, it had become increasingly plain, as the kingdom extended, that one central body was unequal to the growing pressure of judicial work and unsuited in other ways to the needs of the

people; arrears, which there was no prospect of overtaking, had accumulated apace; and for suitors in the more distant provinces, as these came under the Crown, the difficulty and danger of a journey to Paris added materially to the trouble and expense of litigation. Moreover, upon the occasion of many important acquisitions the Crown had been obliged to reckon with the existence of an intense local patriotism; and the erection or retention of local tribunals was a politic concession to the people of newly incorporated provinces, bent upon preserving, in semblance if not in reality, their ancient independence. Influenced by these considerations, the Government had shown itself consistently favourable to the establishment of provincial tribunals. The Parlement of Toulouse had been finally organized in 1443; within the next twenty years Dauphiné and Guyenne had been provided with similar institutions; the Parlement, created for Burgundy in 1477 and then abolished, was re-established at Dijon in 1498; the Exchequer of Normandy was promoted to the rank of Parlement ten years later; and Provence was provided with a Parlement at Aix in 1501. Within the areas assigned to these bodies the Parlement of Paris was deprived of the greater part of its jurisdiction, but in relation to the expanding demesne those areas were limited in extent, and despite all encroachments the central supreme court still retained its authority over a wide field: at the close of Louis XII's reign thirty-four *bailliages*, seventeen *senéchaussées*, the *Prévôté* of Paris, and the Governments of La Rochelle and the Somme Towns were still subject to its authority. Moreover, it retained its exclusive jurisdiction in cases affecting the Crown, the Great Officers, peers, and Princes of the Blood; and, unlike those of its rivals, its decrees were executed throughout the kingdom, and without the leave or sanction of any other tribunal.

The action of the Parlement of Paris on politics has, perhaps, been magnified by its eulogists, but its influence was considerable, and was consistently exerted in the best interests of the nation. In view of its origin it had naturally acquired a position of authority in public affairs, and its prescriptive right to be represented at States-General, the employment of its members upon embassies and secret missions, and its power of legislating by *arrêts de règlement* upon judicial and

administrative points had preserved its connexion with political life. Its position had been much strengthened by the practice which had grown up of submitting Royal ordinances and edicts for entry on its rolls and by the opportunities for remonstrance which were afforded by the formality of registration. It was true that this feature of the Parlement's activity was resented by the Crown, and that autocratic sovereigns were in a position to render it ineffective. Still, the right of remonstrance and the power of obstruction remained: they had caused hasty decisions to be reversed; they had preserved the liberties of the Gallican Church; they had enabled voices to be raised in condemnation of unjust measures; and they had put checks upon despotism which, though it might have been possible, it had not always been thought prudent, to remove. In the presence of the Crown the Parlement was now face to face with a power verging upon absolutism, upon which few other checks remained; and that it would acquit itself with honour in the difficulties and dangers of the future was a reasonable hope in the light of its honourable past. The relentless foe at once of feudal anarchy and of ecclesiastical privilege, it had in more than one period of violence and disorder stood forth, broad based on law and justice, as the chief instrument of centralization and government. Now that circumstances were changing, it was displaying both wisdom and courage in modifying its attitude to meet the new conditions; against the Crown, which it had before supported as a principle of order in the midst of anarchy, it now stood up as the guardian of the feeble and the champion of the oppressed. Shadows might, indeed, be found in the picture. The Parlement was as callous to the rights of others as it was tenacious of its own; its firmness would sometimes degenerate into obduracy; and its policy tended to estrange it alike from the Crown, whose ambitions it had ceased to support, and from the people, whose affections it had failed to win. Nevertheless, it impressed Machiavelli¹ as the best institution in the best-governed kingdom of the day, and assuredly it was entitled to be regarded, in the words of Hallam's panegyric, as 'almost the sole depository, if not of what we should call the love of freedom, yet of public spirit and attachment to

¹ *The Prince*, ch. xix; see also *Political Discourses upon Livy*, bk. iii, ch. i.

justice. France, so fertile of great men in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, might better spare, perhaps, from her annals any class and description of them than her lawyers. Doubtless the parliament of Paris, with its prejudices and narrow views, its high notions of loyal obedience so strangely mixed up with remonstrances and resistance, its anomalous privilege of objecting to edicts, hardly approved by the nation who did not participate in it, and overturned with facility by the King whenever he thought fit to exert the sinews of his prerogative, was but an inadequate substitute for that co-ordinate sovereignty, that equal concurrence of national representatives in legislation, which has long been the exclusive pride of our government, and to which the States-General of France, in their best days, had never aspired. . . . Yet the name of the parliament of Paris must ever be respectable. It exhibited upon various occasions virtues from which human esteem is as inseparable as the shadow from the substance—a severe adherence to principles, an unaccommodating sincerity, individual disinterestedness and consistency.’¹

¹ Hallam, *View of the State of Europe during the Middle Ages*, edit. of 1871, pp. 117–18.

XXXII

POLITICAL CONDITIONS

THE FISCAL SYSTEM. RETROSPECT AND CONCLUSION

IT is now necessary that we should undertake some examination of the French fiscal system, and, confronted by that task, we may share the apprehensions of a seventeenth-century inquirer, to whom the subject appeared to be 'a very dark mystery, almost impenetrable by strangers, and much unknown to the greatest part of Frenchmen themselves'. Forbidding though the task may be, however, we must nevertheless grapple with it, for some comprehension of its fiscal system is essential to any true understanding of the *ancien régime*.

The distinguishing mark of the system is its duality. Public revenues were of two sorts; each sort was derived from a distinct source, and each was controlled by administrative machinery peculiar to itself. The two branches of the revenue were known respectively as *finances ordinaires* and *finances extraordinaires*, the former consisting of the demesne revenues, which formed the patrimonial inheritance of the sovereign, and the latter comprising the resources of more modern origin, to which the necessities of a developing society had given rise. The distinction between the two branches is vital, and goes to the root of the system which we have to examine. To make it more intelligible, and to impress it more firmly upon our minds, we shall do well to glance briefly at its origin in the history of the past.

In early days, when he had been not so much a sovereign as a seigneur, the King had been dependent upon resources of which the character was purely feudal. His revenues had been derived from his demesne, that is to say, from the estates of which he was the owner or the overlord, whilst his expenditure was directed to demesne objects and to the satisfaction of his own personal needs. Possessing none of the essential attributes of sovereignty, he neither received public revenue nor provided for public expenditure. Public services did not, indeed, exist: his army, when he had one, was a feudal levy; his executive, so far as it existed, was composed of personal officers and demesne stewards; there was no diplo-

matic personnel; justice paid for itself; and education was provided by the Church. Thus in the matter of income and expenditure there was no difference between the King and a great feudatory, the revenues of each being wholly seigniorial, and the expenditure purely personal.

As society developed and the power of the Crown increased, there arose needs for which no provision was made under the feudal régime. Under that régime there was no such thing as a system of taxation based upon appropriate contributions by all subjects to the exchequer of the State: not only did the thing not exist, but feudalism had never so much as envisaged the idea or contemplated the possibility of such a development. Thus it happened that few of the feudal dues were of a nature to offer any possibility of transmutation into general taxes, and of the two which did offer such a possibility one, the feudal *taille*, had been virtually abolished by a general enfranchisement of serfs. In favour of the transmutation of the other, the feudal *aide*, was the fact that the area within which *aides* became payable to the King was continually being widened by the expansion of the demesne, and if an *aide* could have been levied throughout the kingdom as a payment in lieu of military service, the result would have approximated to a system of public taxation. The Crown strove for such a development, but had to give way before the opposition of subjects, who objected to being taxed, and of feudal lords, who resented an invasion of their own fiscal preserves. Defeated in that attempt, the Crown was again left with no public revenue, though the whole scope of its expenditure had been transformed and progressive institutions had begun to impose demands which the demesne could no longer satisfy. For such a situation a remedy must in any case have been found at some time and in some way. The need became imperative when the Hundred Years' War called for a sustained effort in national defence, an effort which could be made only at a great and continuing expense, such as was altogether beyond the already overstrained resources of the demesne. In the throes of the great national crisis it became plain that the fiscal system based upon *finances ordinaires* had broken down.

The system based upon *finances extraordinaires* was devised to fill the void, the new resources being called

'extraordinary', because they were regarded as temporary expedients to meet an exceptional and transitory expense. The States-General of 1355 created an army of 30,000 men-at-arms at an estimated cost of 5,000,000*l.*, and, to defray the cost, voted an impost of 8 *deniers* in the *livre* on all sales of goods. A new administration, answerable to the States, was set up to deal with the collection and application of the impost. The impost was not in the ordinary sense a tax, and it was not granted to the Crown; it was designed merely as an alternative method of discharging the feudal liability to military service; and the method was rendered the easier of adoption that for half a century or more it had been customary for vassals and commoners to escape personal liability by the payment respectively of an *aide* or a *taille*. Once imposed, the new system of taxation was retained and extended, for the prolongation of the war demanded the continuance of a national defence force supported by adequate pecuniary resources. Then in Charles VII's time the system of military defence was reorganized, with a new tax, the *taille*, to support it; and, the new army being permanent, the new tax necessarily took a permanent place in the fiscal armoury of the State.

In establishing new forms of taxation without asserting effective control over them, the States-General had forged a weapon which the Crown could appropriate and, having appropriated, could wield at its own pleasure. In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries the fiscal system underwent the same change as the judicial and became Royal, the budget of the sovereign assuming the public character which it had previously lacked. Important parts of the revenue were now derived from permanent general taxes which were paid to the King as sovereign, and the parts which were in origin feudal, such as licences in mortmain, export duties, dues on the sale of salt, and fees on the establishment of markets and fairs, assumed a regalian character and were treated as Royal monopolies. Expenditure underwent a similar change, covering as it now did a public civil service and an army maintained for national defence. The belief that the King ought to 'live of his own', or provide for the cost of government from demesne resources, was still widely held,¹ but it was

¹ In the States-General of 1484 '*dicebant domanium eo regi traditum ut*

cherished in defiance of facts which made its absurdity patent, for the *finances ordinaires* were wholly inadequate to discharge the public liabilities, of which the *finances extraordinaires* had become, and must remain, the chief support.

Having learned so much of its origin, we must now look into the system, and get a clear notion of the difference between 'ordinary' and 'extraordinary' taxation.

Demesne resources might be classified in various ways. There was, for example, a distinction between the *domaine muable*, of which the yield was variable, and the *domaine non muable*, of which the yield was fixed. 'Many lands were burdened in perpetuity with dues in money or in kind: such and such a field had to pay a *cens* of so many *sous* or *deniers*; such another had to contribute so many measures of corn or oats or wine or so many hens; the commoners of such and such a village were hereditarily subject to an annual *taille*; the owner of such and such a close had to perform so many days' forced labour (*corvées*). One generation would pass away and be succeeded by another, but these charges on the land endured, stable as the land that bore them. Therefore it had seemed to the people that the burden was eternal, and the epithet, *immuable*, had come to be applied to the part of the demesne which included these perpetual rents.'¹ From the fiscal point of view another classification may more conveniently be adopted, demesne revenues being considered according to their origin in the yield of lands of which the King was owner, in the feudal dues which he received as suzerain, and in the regalian rights which he enjoyed as sovereign.

From the ownership of land the King drew the ordinary income of a territorial magnate in the shape of profits from farms, vineyards, forests, mines, and fisheries which were kept in hand and of rents from those which were let. Forests were rarely let, being greatly prized as game-preserves; but they were turned to account pecuniarily by sales of timber or by leases of timber rights and by charges for pasturage and permission to collect firewood. Rustic labour being

inde suae domus statum ducat et solita portet onera, quod etiam aliquando tam amplum fuit ut potuerit quibusdam reipublicae necessitatibus sine aliis tributis sufficere': Masselin, *Journal*, p. 414.

¹ Dupont-Ferrier, *Officiers royaux*, pp. 543-4.

scarce and dear, agricultural land was more often let than kept in hand, rents being payable either in money in the ordinary way or in kind when the tenant held under the *métayage* system for a consideration composed of a defined share of the crop. Fisheries in both salt water and fresh, if not exploited for the owner's benefit, yielded the fees which were charged for the right to take fish.

In the next group came the feudal dues which the King received from his vassals and tenants. These included *cens* and *champarts*, or the rents payable in money or in kind by commoners for *terres roturières*; reliefs payable on changes in the ownership of noble fiefs and commoner holdings; and dues exacted on the issue of licences in mortmain. When a hereditament held of the lord *en censive* changed hands, an *ad valorem* duty was payable, the amount being fixed by local custom, generally at one-twelfth. *Lods et ventes*, as this duty was called, usually fell upon the purchaser, who, however, frequently evaded it by not declaring the sale, though the duty might be doubled for unreasonable delay in payment, whilst forfeiture was the penalty for deliberate evasion. When a hereditament, which was held as a fief, changed hands by sale, exchange, or gift, it owed a due equal to 24 per cent. *ad valorem*, made up of one-fifth (*quint*) plus one-fifth of a fifth (*requint*). The duty was borne either by the purchaser alone or by vendor and purchaser in equal shares. As with *lods et ventes*, the King was often defrauded of his dues by concealment of sales, and in 1507 the abuse had become so prevalent as to call for remedial action by the Chambre des Comptes: the Chambre ordered the compilation of a register of demesne fiefs, which should show the names of all proprietors, and directed that the register should be revised annually, so that changes of ownership might be discovered and payment of dues owing to the Crown be enforced. A relief, usually equal to one year's income, was payable when a fief changed hands by death; and a duty, called the *droit de rachat*, became due upon the resumption of land previously alienated with a right of redemption. When a noble fief passed into the hands of a commoner, the overlord suffered damage, because a commoner could not perform the appropriate military service, and for this damage he exacted compensation in the shape of a *droit de franc-fief*.

Similar compensation was demanded when the land passed into the possession of an ecclesiastical corporation, a due equal to one-third of the value being required upon the grant of a licence in mortmain. Originally feudal in character, licences in mortmain had become a Royal monopoly, and the *droit de franc-fief* had undergone a similar transformation.

The dues in the third group, which were seigneurial in character, were of various kinds. First, there were judicial profits, court fines, confiscated estates, fees for sealing documents and for issuing letters of grace, pardon, naturalization, legitimation, and ennoblement, and charges for commissions and sales of offices. Then came a batch of seigneurial rights, such as the right of succession to the estates of intestates, aliens, and bastards (*droit de déshérence*, *droit d'aubaine*, and *droit de bâtardise*); the right to annex property without an owner, such as treasure-trove, things lost, animals strayed, and salvage from wrecks (*droit d'épave* and *droit de bris*); and the right, usually commuted for a money payment, to be lodged and entertained abroad and to be supplied with necessities at home (*droit de gîte* and *droit de prise*). Then came a group of dues and tolls: dues were paid by persons, vehicles, animals, and merchandise in transit through a seigneurie; tolls were levied on roads, bridges, and rivers, in harbours, and at town gates; and there were dues on the sale of wine and other commodities, on markets and fairs, and on the use of the lord's weights and measures. Seigneurial monopolies, called *banalités*, yielded their profit, such as the fees payable for baking bread in the lord's oven, grinding corn in his mill, and pressing grapes in his winepress; and akin to these, because in their nature monopolistic, were the profits derived from the lord's right to market his wine in priority to all other vintages. Last in this group came the indirect yield of the liability to furnish gratuitous service known as the *corvée*. It had been an invariable condition of primitive feudal contracts that plebeian tenants should perform certain services for their lord, such as felling his timber, scything his hay and corn, carrying his crops, picking his grapes, repairing his buildings, and cleaning out his ditches. To these had been added obligations of more general utility, such as the repair of highways, the upkeep of bridges, the conservancy of rivers, and the defence of towns. The duty to perform these

services had been imposed, after the manner of the Roman administration, in lieu of cash taxation for defraying their cost, the time and mode of performance being fixed by customary law; but even though the worst asperities of that law had been softened by the more humane legislation of the Crown, *corvées* continued nevertheless to be numerous, and burdens which were felt to be vexatious were a prolific source of popular discontent.

There were two other groups of dues comprised in demesne profits, the one exceptional in character, the other mixed, being either feudal or seigneurial according to the relation subsisting between payer and recipient. Amongst the dues which were exceptional in that they were Royal monopolies were the *droit de régale*, or right to enjoy the income of a see, abbacy, or benefice during vacancy and to exercise the patronage appertaining thereto; the right to impose a tax upon benefice-holders in the shape of *décimes*; the profits of the mint; and the right to a share of the output of all quarries and mines. Amongst the mixed dues were the feudal *aides* and *tailles* which could be demanded of vassals and subjects in lieu of military service or for other causes recognized by feudal law. *Décimes*, *aides*, and *tailles*, the *gabelle* or salt-tax, and the import and export duties known as *droits de rève*, *droits de haut passage*, and *traites foraines*, though all in origin feudal or seigneurial, had changed completely in character, and no longer counted among the demesne revenues. They had become exclusively Royal, and were organized to furnish the resources known as *finances extraordinaires*.

Before turning from the subject of the *finances ordinaires* we may pause for a moment to note that the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries had witnessed an attempt to establish two new principles with regard to the demesne, namely, its inalienability, and the merger therein of all the King's private possessions upon his accession to the throne. Both were the outcome of the theory that the King should as far as possible 'live of his own' and of the perception that the burden upon the taxpayer was increased in the proportion in which demesne revenues were diminished. Regarding themselves as its absolute owners, Kings were apt to alienate the demesne, not only for the legitimate purpose of providing appanages for

their younger sons and brothers, but also for the less proper purpose of rewarding servants and enriching favourites. States-General, who looked upon the King as a trustee; Councillors, who cared for the power of the Crown; and the nation, which knew that it must make up in *finances extraordinaires* for any deficiency in the King's patrimonial resources—all these were at one in desiring the preservation of the demesne and in opposing every tendency towards its dissipation. Every sovereign was required at his coronation to take a solemn vow against improper alienation, and the theory that alienations were permissible only to appanage younger sons of France or to provide cash urgently needed in time of war seemed to have taken a place among the 'fundamental laws' of the realm. The theory that all the possessions privately owned by a sovereign before his accession became merged in the demesne and were affected by its inalienability was also maintained, but with less assurance. Louis XII had challenged it, consciously or unconsciously, when he had proposed to give his daughter's hand to the Archduke and to dower her alike with his Italian conquests and with the patrimonial estates of his House. Had the Austrian marriage project been carried out, a constitutional issue of some magnitude would have been raised. Claude, however, had been married to the King's heir, and her father's submission to the nation's will might be regarded as a tacit acknowledgement that the nation had right on its side.

So much for the demesne revenues or *finances ordinaires*. We must now examine the nature of the *finances extraordinaires* based upon the system of *aides*. And first it is to be noted that the word *aide* was used in two different senses. It might be employed as a generic term, comprising all such resources of the Crown as were not derived from the demesne, in which sense it embraced direct taxes, such as the *taille*, indirect taxes, such as dues on sales, the profits of the salt-monopoly, and duties on imports and exports. Or it might be used in a restricted sense to denote specifically the dues which were payable on the sale of objects of ordinary consumption, and it is with *aides* of this nature that we have to concern ourselves more particularly. *Aides*, in the narrower sense, were derived from the expedient which

the States-General had adopted in the fourteenth century, though their character had since undergone a radical change. Originally they had been imposed by the authority of the national representatives, managed by a service independent of the Crown, and allocated to the specific purpose of national defence, whilst it had been of their essence as *finances extraordinaires* that they should be treated as temporary expedients to satisfy a transient need. The original designation survived, but the original characteristics had perished, for there was no longer anything extraordinary about the 'extraordinary' taxation, unless it were the regularity with which it was levied. *Aides* were now imposed by the authority of the Crown, and were managed by its agents; no longer allocated to any specific object, they were merged in the general resources of the Government; and, no longer exceptional or temporary, they had taken a permanent place in the fiscal system of the country. As imposed at the beginning of the sixteenth century, they consisted of two taxes on sales, namely a fractional *ad valorem* charge, varying from an eighth to a quarter, on the sale price of wines and other liquors, and a due of one-twentieth, or 12 *deniers* in the *livre*, on the sale price of other specified commodities. The commodities were numerous, and comprised many of the necessities of life. Corn, flour, and bread were liable; so were cattle, calves, sheep, and pigs, poultry and fish, butcher's meat and cooked meat, fats, and spices; clothing contributed through the dues on wool and woollen goods, silks, linen, leather, boots and shoes, skins and furs, haberdashery, hats, and dyes; and housing yielded its quota through the tax on building materials, coal and charcoal, cooking utensils, lighting appliances, tapestry, and goldsmith's work. The taxpayer therefore felt the burden of the impost in nearly all the transactions of his everyday life, and its vexatious character was intensified by the abuses of the system under which it was farmed out and by glaring inequalities in the shape of class exemptions and regional differentiation. No *aides* were paid by the magistracy of the Parlements or by members of the superior revenue tribunals; and the produce of their lands was marketed free of them by clerical and noble owners. In many provinces the tax was not levied at all, some having preferred to offer an 'equivalent' of their own raising, and

others having secured preferential treatment to gild the pill of annexation. The system of 'equivalents' obtained in Languedoc, La Marche, Poitou, and other lesser districts. The manner of raising them varied from one region to another. In Languedoc, whose system was the best known, a round sum was raised by a tax on retail sales of meat and fish, with exemption for clerical and noble purchasers to the extent of their personal consumption. Elsewhere the 'equivalent' was as a rule levied along with, and as an addition to, the *taille*.

That famous tax, though of comparatively recent origin, had already become very important, and was fast assuming the place which it would eventually fill as the mainstay of the Royal budget. Like the *aides*, the *taille* resulted from the patriotic effort of Frenchmen during their secular struggle to evict the English foe, having been adopted by the States-General in Charles VII's time to defray the cost of the permanent army which had then been created. As with the *aides*, the Crown had taken over and altered the machinery set up by the States, and the *taille* had developed into a permanent tax imposed by Royal authority. States-General, if in session, might still be asked for their approval, but these bodies were rarely convened, and the Crown had successfully asserted the right to impose by Royal warrant both the *taille* estimated to be required in any year and such supplementary payments, called *crues de taille*, as might be necessitated by disappointing returns or unforeseen demands. No other vestige of popular control was any longer to be found, unless it were in the districts, called *pays d'états*, in which the provincial Estates were allowed the privilege of managing the assessment and the collection of the tax.

The tax existed in two forms, as *taille réelle* and *taille personnelle*. *Taille réelle*, which was levied in Languedoc and part of Guyenne, was an *ad valorem* property tax on non-noble hereditaments, assessed on the basis of a valuation made by the experts of the Cour des Aides with the help of local judicial officers. As liability to this tax depended upon the quality of the land and not upon the status of the proprietor, it followed, at all events in theory, that the owner of a *terre roturière* had to pay, though a noble, and that the owner of a *terre noble* escaped, though belonging to the

unprivileged commoner class; but in practice the lack of private title-deeds and official land registers made it difficult to establish the quality of land with precision or successfully to resist unjustified claims by influential landed proprietors. Elsewhere the *taille* was personal, in which shape it constituted a much more serious burden. In the first place, the taxpayer was assessed upon his whole income from whatever source derived, whether from ownership or occupation of lands or from personal exertions. In the second place, it fell only upon sections of the *roturier* classes, since all nobles, all churchmen, and many judges and officials were exempt from its operation. Having been created, and being still regarded, as a tax for military purposes and in lieu of military service, it was natural that there should be exemption for the clergy, whom such service did not concern, and the more so, since in the tax called *décimes* they made a corresponding contribution of their own; nobles escaped, because they had been accustomed, and were still liable, to serve in person, or, as was said, to pay with their blood; and judges and officials engaged in work of national importance were deemed to pay with their time and their brains. The exemption of important cities, such as Paris and Rouen, arose from other considerations, it being thought that the *taille* would be difficult to assess and collect in crowded urban areas: nor did it matter so much, since these cities were required to make an equivalent contribution either by the levy of *octroi* duties at the town gates or in such other manner as each might prefer.

The third main source of the *finances extraordinaires* was the *gabelle*, which was a duty levied on the sale of salt. The notion of regulating salt-supplies and making a profit out of the control had probably been suggested by an experience of the early years of the fourteenth century, when Government intervention had been called for by an acute shortage of salt, brought about by unfavourable weather and intensified by speculative buying. Be that as it may, by the middle of the century the *gabelle* had been organized, and *greniers* or salt-houses had been established, to ensure supplies and in return to secure a profit for the Crown. As with *aides* and *tailles*, there was an utter lack of uniformity in regional organization. There were *pays de grande gabelle*, in which the

full weight of the Royal monopoly was felt; there were *pays de petite gabelle*, in which it was felt in a modified form; there were districts which had contracted out; and there were districts which were free. In one-half of the kingdom there were no salt-houses; in the other half the number was increasing so rapidly that it had doubled in less than a century, and stood at over one hundred and fifty at the death of Louis XII. Of these depots a score were to be found on the Mediterranean coast, and most of the rest to the north of the Loire, the intervening region, which had no *greniers*, being the area in which salt was produced.

The *pays de grande gabelle* consisted of Normandy, Outre-Seine, Picardy, and the northern and western parts of Languedoc, and thus comprised about one-half of the kingdom. In this area, as English travellers were amazed to learn, there was no man that might eat salt but if he bought it of the King, for all salt had to be taken to the King's salt-houses, to be purchased from the depositor at market values and resold to the public at an enhanced price. To ensure a remunerative rate of consumption, and to discourage contraband trade, the head of every family was required to make quarterly purchases of specified amounts, and in the use of this *sel de devoir* he was restricted to the daily purposes of the kitchen. It was not, perhaps, very likely that he would find himself in possession of a surplus, for his compulsory ration was moderate in amount, but should he do so, and desire to use it for such purposes as curing bacon or pickling pork, he was compelled to go back to the *grenier* for leave to use it, when it was in the discretion of the officials to oblige him with a permit or make him purchase an additional supply. In the *pays de petite gabelle*, such as Languedoc, Provence, Lyonnais, and Dauphiné, the scale of dues was lower and the system of compulsory purchases was not in force; but if more fortunate than their neighbours in some respects, these districts were not exempt from rigorous control or irritating restrictions. In the salt-producing area along the Atlantic sea-board, which comprised Poitou, Saintonge, Aunis, Angoumois, and Bordelais, commerce in salt was free, but every sale was subject to a tax of 20 or 25 per cent. on the sale price. In Brittany salt for local consumption paid no tax, but the commodity was subject to export

duties when sent abroad or consigned to other parts of the kingdom.

A further contribution to the *finances extraordinaires* was made by the impost on the clergy known as *décimes*. The clergy were exempted by their profession from obligation to render the *service de l'ost* and so from liability to pay the *aide* into which that service might be commuted, and in theory they were not liable for any secular taxation. In practice, however, they had from early days been required to contribute to objects of a semi-religious character, such as crusades. Such contributions were made in the form of 'free gifts' on the authorization of the Pope, and that no such gift might be made without Papal sanction had been laid down in the bull *Clericis laicos*; but the effect of that famous pronouncement had been much impaired by a subsequent avowal that the King had the right to take a contribution from the clergy when he deemed that a case of necessity had arisen. Being thus constituted the judge in his own cause, the King had soon found pretexts for multiplying *décimes*, and the impost was now exacted with a regularity which made it a permanent feature of the Royal budget. The *décime* was a tax calculated on the net average income of ecclesiastical benefices, and might be a tenth, or less, or more. In theory it was voted by the clergy as a voluntary offering, and it was assessed and collected by clerical officials. The chief objection to it was that it pressed with undue severity upon the lower grades of the clergy, and in particular upon the struggling parish priest.

In the fiscal armoury of the medieval Treasury customs duties, or *traites*, as they were called, occupied an unimportant place. The feudal seigneur thought himself entitled to a share in the profit on everything produced in his demesne, and to secure that share he instituted his tolls, market dues, and sales taxes. Imported goods, which by the mere fact of entry would become subject to the same exactions, he was therefore disposed rather to welcome than to check, with the result that import duties were imposed very rarely, and never for purely fiscal ends. With exports the position was reversed, for the producer who sent his goods out of the seignury evaded all the internal dues which would otherwise have been incurred, and it was thought but fair that he

should make an equivalent contribution in the shape of a tax on exports. The King inherited the feudal tradition in relation to his demesne, but in relation to his kingdom he was called upon to take a wider view, for in the hands of the Crown customs duties might be used to regulate supplies during periods of dearth, to control the stock of precious metals, to restrict the export of war material, to further political ends by helping the commerce of a friend or injuring that of a foe, and perhaps even to check foreign competition in the interests of domestic trade, though such intervention was usually made superfluous by lack of means of communication and the enormous cost of transport. The customs duties which Francis I inherited from an earlier age were for the most part the outcome of commercial restrictions which had been converted to fiscal ends. In the thirteenth century the export of wool had been prohibited in the national interest, the object being to retain for French looms the raw material of the cloth trade; but the edict had not been strictly enforced, the Crown finding it convenient to permit exports under a system of licences. That the practice thus inaugurated might be extended with profitable results was perceived by Philippe le Bel, who proceeded to bring the whole trade of the country within the scope of the export prohibitions for the express purpose of exacting dues for permits to export. These dues were called *droits de haut passage*. To facilitate exports and remedy the grievances of foreign buyers, certain classes of goods were then freed from prohibitive restrictions and made available for export upon payment of certain tonnage and poundage dues, which were fixed at 10s. on the cask of wine and at 4d. in the *livre ad valorem* on other commodities. These duties were called *droits de rève*. A third duty, called the *imposition foraine*, instituted in the fourteenth century and developed in the fifteenth, mingled with the other two. When the system of raising *aides* by the imposition of a tax on sales had been brought into operation, it was noticed that no contribution was made by goods which were sent either to foreign countries or to such parts of the kingdom as levied no *aides*. To remedy this a tax, equivalent to the sales tax, of 12d. in the *livre ad valorem* was imposed upon all merchandise consigned from districts subject to *aides* to districts or countries not so

subject. The result was the creation of provincial as well as national customs frontiers, for goods became dutiable, not only when they left the country for a foreign destination, but also when they left an *aide*-paying province, such as Languedoc, for the *aide*-free districts in Artois, Brittany, and Languedoc. At the beginning of the sixteenth century the *imposition foraine* and the *droit de rève* operated as consolidated export dues, with the *droit de haut passage* superimposed as a selective surtax upon wool, textiles, skins, horses, and arms.

The distinction between *finances ordinaires* and *finances extraordinaires* was preserved in the system under which the revenues were administered, each branch being managed by its own peculiar service. Officials called Treasurers controlled the demesne revenues; taxation was managed by officials called Generals of Finance. The connecting links which were required to bind the two together in a unified national system were provided in part by the Conseil des Finances, which controlled and directed both and framed a common budget, and in part by the Chambre des Comptes, which audited all public accounts.

Consisting as they did of the rents and profits of Crown lands and of analogous receipts, the demesne revenues had naturally been handled at first by the officials who administered the demesne lands, that is to say, by the *Prévôts* and *Bayles* and by the *Baillis* and Seneschals. As the demesne extended and administration became more complex, however, the primitive system had undergone modification, and *Prévôts* and *Baillis* had been deprived of many of their fiscal powers either by the establishment of special administrative services, such as the Mint and the Woods and Forests, or by the creation of new fiscal officials, such as the *Receveurs*, who were charged with the receipt of the whole cash yield of Crown lands. The outline of the demesne administration as it existed in 1515 may be briefly sketched. The country was divided into four main districts, which were called *charges*, and consisted of Languedoc, Languedoc, Outre-Seine, and Normandy. Four Treasurers controlled the administration with the help of a cashier, called the *Changeur*, who acted as a Receiver-General, and of the *Clerc du Trésor*, who performed the functions of a Comptroller. Local receipts in each *prévôté* were handled

by a *Receveur*, who defrayed local expenses on orders signed by the *Bailli*, and remitted the balance to the Treasury. The Treasurers exercised supreme control over the central Treasury and over demesne administration, supervising it in all its branches, appointing and dismissing subordinate officials, and authorizing all expenditure other than expenditure for war, for which special Treasurers were appointed. Officials known as the *Contrôleurs du Trésor* kept a register of Treasury receipts and expenditure, and verified the accounts both of the *Changeur* and of the local Receivers.

The administration of the *finances extraordinaires* was altogether different. To begin with, as these revenues were much larger than those of the demesne, the system by which they were administered was necessarily more complicated. In the second place, the two systems covered different areas, for the demesne revenues were drawn exclusively from Crown lands, whilst the taxation which furnished 'extraordinary' revenue was levied from the whole kingdom. In the third place, the time and manner of the institution of taxes had resulted in the creation of a special machinery, the taxes having originally been created by the States and placed by them under a service not responsible to the Crown. The chief officials called into being by the States having been known as Generals of Finance, the main territorial divisions had come to be known as *généralités*. The local management of taxation having been entrusted to persons elected by the taxpayers, the subdivisions had been called *élections*. These territorial divisions survived under their old names, though the name *élection* had become a misnomer, seeing that under Crown management the taxpayer had ceased to have a voice in the selection of revenue officers. The *élection* was the primary area for most of the purposes of 'extraordinary' taxation, but not for all, since the salt-taxes were administered under a special régime, and for them the division was into areas dependent upon the *greniers à sel*. For many years the main divisions for taxation purposes had corresponded with the main divisions for demesne administration, and although no longer conterminous with an expanding kingdom, the four *charges* of the Treasurers were still matched by the four *généralités* of Languedoil, Languedoc, Outre-Seine, and Normandy. The *élection*,

when first created, had usually coincided with an ecclesiastical diocese, but there had never been any fixed rule for the delimitation of fiscal areas, with the result that boundaries had been left subject to an uncertainty which was prolific of disputes. It was another peculiarity of *élections* that they varied much in size, though there was a marked tendency to eliminate the larger district, since experience had proved that compactness promoted the convenience of the taxpayer, favoured administrative efficiency, and strengthened the authority of the Crown in the seignorial area outside the demesne. *Élections* had therefore tended to multiply, and by the beginning of the sixteenth century their number did not fall short of one hundred.¹

The assessment, recovery, and general management of the *finances extraordinaires* occupied a larger personnel. At the head were the Generals of Finance, who, like the Treasurers, formed a central board collectively responsible for general administration with individual responsibility for a particular area. The Generals sat in the Finance Council, where they helped to frame the budget and to draft fiscal legislation; they controlled the general and local administration and paid visits of inspection throughout the kingdom; they admitted subordinate officials to office, directed their activities, and supervised their conduct; and they gave the authority upon which payments were made. Beside the General in each *généralité* there were to be found a Receiver-General and a Comptroller-General, the former centralizing the cash receipts of his district and defraying authorized charges, the latter keeping a check upon him by means of a register of receipts and payments. These officials differed from the Generals in that the authority of each was limited to his special area, in the chief town of which he took up his residence. The *Élus*, retaining their old name despite their new status as Royal officials, managed the fiscal subdistricts under the orders of the Generals and with the help of clerks, who acted as Comptrollers, and of Receivers, who handled receipts. The powers of the *Élus*, of whom there were generally two in each *élection*, were in part administrative, in part financial, in part judicial, and, like those of the *Bailli*, were for the most part exercisable not personally, but through a Council.

¹ Dupont-Ferrier, *Institutions financières*, vol. i, pp. 31-52.

The *Élus* acted as channels of communication between the Generals and the taxpayers; collected economic and fiscal information; farmed out the *aides*; supervised the *gabelle*; and exercised civil and criminal jurisdiction in cases relating to taxation. They did not handle cash, for in each *élection* there was a Receiver of *aides* and a Receiver of *tailles*, the two posts being usually held by the same official.

The system under which the *aides* were collected was fairly simple, for these taxes were almost invariably farmed out. The plan followed was to give public notice of the intention to let the farm, and then to invite tenders under a system of auction by candle. The farmer was usually an individual, for syndicates were in general distrusted for fear lest they should lead to the creation of 'rings' in restraint of competition. For much the same reason there was a disinclination to allot the farms to persons of local importance; and there was an official rule that friends and relatives of the *Élus* should be held ineligible to tender.

A more intricate procedure was required for the assessment and collection of the *taille*. As we shall presently see, when we consider the framing of the budget, the total amount of *taille* leviable from the country in any year was apportioned by the Finance Council between the *généralités*, and then the share of each *généralité* was apportioned by the responsible General between its constituent *élections*. The share of each *élection* being thus ascertained, the next step was to allocate it between the component parishes, and this was done by the *Élus* and their advisory Council upon the basis of the *Élus*' reports. The last step was the apportionment of the parochial assessment between the taxpaying inhabitants of the parish, and that duty was entrusted to assessors elected by the taxpayers. Upon assessment followed collection. The amount at which the taxpayer was assessed was paid by him to the collector of his parish; the collector passed it on to the Receiver of the *élection*; the balance after payment of authorized local expenses was paid by the Receiver to his official superior, the Receiver-General of the *généralité*; and the ultimate balance was held by the Receiver-General at the disposal of the King. Though parish collectors were remunerated by an allowance of 12*d.* in the *livre* on moneys handled, it had been found necessary to

enact that persons elected should be compelled to take office, for a collectorship was a post which none would willingly accept. True, the collector was invested with a transient dignity and armed with considerable powers, but dignity made small amends for danger, and danger beset him, his path being beset with pitfalls. A mistake, however honest, might entail ruinous consequences: thus in 1519 a village collector attempted to levy taxation from a local landowner, whom he believed to be a commoner, but who was able to establish a title to immunity by virtue of noble status; and as a result of the blunder he had to pay in damages and costs a sum equal to £400 in modern money.¹ Moreover, it was incumbent upon a collector to produce the full amount of *taille* due from his parish irrespectively of his ability to collect it from the taxpayers, and this under penalty of having all his own property seized and his person thrown into jail.

The methods by which the *gabelle* was recovered varied from region to region with the provincial variations in the nature of the tax. In the districts in which the impost was levied by a tax on sales, it was farmed out by commissioners. The *pays de grande gabelle* were divided into areas called *greniers*, each under a *Grènetier*, assisted by a Comptroller. Except in Languedoc, where the salt-monopoly was managed by the *Visiteur-Général des Gabelles*, an official peculiar to that province, the *greniers* and their personnel were subject to the Generals and Receivers-General. The *grenier* was an administrative unit distinct from the *élection*; nor, as a rule, did the boundaries of the two coincide. As salt was usually transported by water, the storage depots were for the most part on the banks of rivers, though such a situation was open to the grave objection that the cellars were necessarily damp and that in times of inundation they were subject to flooding, which ruined their contents. A Royal ordinance of Louis XII's time contained the damaging admission that salt was stored in the *greniers* for such long periods and in such unsuitable conditions that upon its sale to the public much of it was unfit for human use.²

The collection of customs duties was controlled by officials

¹ P. Raveau, *L'Agriculture et les classes paysannes dans le Haut-Poitou au XVI^e siècle*, p. 261.

² Jacqueton, *Documents financiers*, pp. 141-2.

called *Maîtres des Ports et Passages*. The *droits de rève* and *droits de haut passage* were levied at the frontiers; the *imposition foraine* was levied at the starting-point in markets or shops, though the exporter, upon giving security, was permitted to defer payment of duty until his goods had actually been sold. The fact that most articles were liable to be taxed on the basis of a value assessed by the customs officer did not make for harmony in the collection of these dues.

Such was the fiscal system in its broad outlines, but it has to be remembered that it was peculiarly rich in the local and administrative anomalies which were so common under the *ancien régime*, and so greatly complicate the task of description. The first point to note is that the four great divisions upon which the fiscal administration was based did not comprise the whole country, because there were provinces to which special treatment had been accorded or in which the privilege of fiscal autonomy had been preserved. Picardy, Burgundy, Dauphiné, Provence, and Brittany were not included in the four main fiscal divisions. In these districts, which were called *recettes générales*, the whole revenue, whether 'ordinary' or 'extraordinary', was dealt with by one administrative service; its chief was usually styled a General, and the official who centralized cash receipts was sometimes known as a Treasurer and sometimes as a Receiver-General. Whilst some districts were thus outside the main fiscal framework, within it there were variations which produced local diversity. In Languedoc, for example, a vigorous opposition had been offered when the Crown had first attempted to arrogate to itself the right to determine the amount and settle the apportionment of taxation, and the province had been permitted to offer in lieu of *aides* an 'equivalent', imposed and collected by the local Estates. In other provinces lately united with the kingdom a similar privilege had been conceded upon annexation. Thus it had come about that the kingdom consisted in part of *pays d'élections* and in part of *pays d'états*, the distinction, however, not as yet being very precise, seeing that there were districts in which fiscal *élections* and provincial Estates subsisted side by side.¹ In Gascony, Quercy, and Rouergue there

¹ Dupont-Ferrier, *Institutions financières*, vol. i, p. 37; vol. ii, p. 347.

were no permanent *Élus*, the functions of those officials being discharged by temporary commissioners. Finally, it is to be observed that the entire revenue service might occasionally be placed under the control of special commissioners, entrusted by the Crown with overriding powers to inquire into suspect administrative methods or to remedy detected abuses.

The Conseil des Finances, of which Treasurers and Generals formed part, prepared the budget or financial statement which showed the amount to be required in any year from the various sources of taxation. It consisted of an estimate of revenue and expenditure for the current year based upon the completed accounts of the year last past or upon the yearly average of the immediately preceding period: the estimate was known as the *état de prévision* or *état par estimation*, and the completed account was called the *état au vray*. The *état au vray* was constructed as follows: at the end of the financial year each provincial official sent to his superior a summary statement of the income and expenditure of his district; by fusing these returns the Treasurers and Generals were able to compile an account for each *charge* and *généralité*; and the amalgamated accounts of *généralités* and *charges* revealed the state of the national income and expenditure. With this information before it the Conseil des Finances was in a position to deal with the current year by the production of an estimate showing on the credit side the probable receipts from demesne, *tailles*, *aides*, *gabelle*, and *traites*, and on the debit side the anticipated expenditure for the year. The total to be required from the variable imposts could then be determined.

The next step was to determine the liabilities of the main administrative districts by apportioning the sum total of taxation between them. For the *recettes générales*, or districts with peculiar fiscal status, there was a joint apportionment of 'ordinary' and 'extraordinary' taxation. For the other districts the demesne quota was apportioned by the Treasurers between the four *charges* and the tax quota was apportioned by the Generals between the *généralités*. This apportionment presented some difficulty owing to scarcity of reliable information, for there were no statistical returns, and all that the Generals could do was to proceed in the light of their own personal knowledge, derived from their

tours of inspection, and of reports on economic conditions furnished by their subordinates. Complaints of inequitable treatment were, of course, many and loud, but it would seem probable that within the limits of their rough-and-ready methods the Generals did in fact succeed quite well in adjusting the fiscal burden to the taxable capacity of the districts. One of the difficulties was that this capacity was constantly varying with changes in economic conditions, and that it was therefore impossible to adhere to a defined scale.

The quota of the *généralité* being determined, the amount was apportioned by the General between the *élections* of the area, and the quota of each *élection* was then subdivided by the *Élus*' Council between the several parishes of which the *élection* was composed. At this stage the process of apportionment, thus far official in character, underwent a change, and the final step, which consisted in splitting up the parish quota between the taxpaying inhabitants, was entrusted in the main to the inhabitants themselves. They met and elected representatives, who proceeded to work out the amounts of individual assessments on the basis of previous rolls as modified by the effects of arrivals, removals, and deaths, and, so far as these could be ascertained, of changes in taxpaying capacity. When the assessors had completed their task, the parochial roll was submitted to a second parish meeting for approval or amendment, and, as finally passed, it became the basis of collection, subject to the right of an aggrieved taxpayer to go before the *Élus* with a complaint that he had been overcharged.

In connexion with the debit side of the national account it is to be observed that expenses were of two kinds: there were those which had been foreseen and specified in the budget, and there were those which had not been foreseen and consequently had not been mentioned. Every item specified in the budget was *ipso facto* sanctioned for payment, so that the disbursing official was cleared by the payee's receipt. To obtain sanction for the payment of unspecified items, it was necessary to be furnished with a document called an *acquit*, which was a special order given under the King's hand in letters patent, directing the Treasurers or Generals to have a specified sum paid by a designated official to a named person. In practice the sums of cash which

reached the central Treasury were rarely large, for in view of the lack of banking and credit facilities and of the risk and cost of moving specie, payments were made as far as possible out of local receipts, and only the ultimate balance was held at the King's disposal. Though the system was convenient, it had its drawbacks. It was by no means impossible that it should produce default by the exhaustion of the revenue allocated to a particular branch of expenditure. Still more probable was it that it would tempt an impecunious sovereign to raid an account momentarily in funds or to anticipate his income by charging the revenue of future years.

The judicial business arising from taxation occupied several tribunals. In early days it had been dealt with by the *Cour du Roi* as a whole; by degrees a group of financial experts had arisen within the main body; then this group had begun to sit separately in the Temple, where the Royal treasure was deposited; and at the beginning of the fourteenth century the detached body acquired an independent existence under the name of the *Chambre des Comptes*. For a time the new tribunal functioned as the sole, supreme organ of judicial and administrative control in the fiscal sphere; but a growing kingdom and a rapidly developing system of public finance had soon demanded that a jurisdiction so extensive should be curtailed, and that control should be decentralized in the interests of judicial and administrative efficiency. The *Chambre des Comptes* was shorn of its powers in two ways. In the first place, the area subject to its authority, which had comprised the whole kingdom, was not permitted to expand as the kingdom grew, but upon the annexation of provinces in which feudal *Chambres des Comptes* existed those institutions were preserved and were entrusted with local control.¹ In the second place, its competence was very greatly restricted by the creation of new tribunals, such as the *Chambre des Monnaies* for mint and coinage matters, the *Chambre du Trésor* for demesne revenue, and the *Cour des Aides* for *finances extraordinaires*. Unlike the Court of Exchequer in England, which became one of the great judicial institutions of the country, the *Chambre des Comptes* declined steadily

¹ Provincial Chambers already existed at Aix, Grenoble, Dijon, and Nantes, and a fifth was about to be set up at Montpellier.

in importance, and by the beginning of the sixteenth century the control of public accounts alone survived of all the general powers which it had once enjoyed.

Subject to the powers of audit of the several *Chambres des Comptes*, supreme jurisdiction in revenue cases and over revenue officers belonged to the *Parlements* as regards the demesne and to the *Cours des Aides* as regards 'extraordinary' taxation. In relation to demesne revenues, however, two special courts had come into being, which interposed an intermediate step between the *Parlements* and the provincial revenue service. These were the *Chambre du Trésor* and the *Chambre des Monnaies*. In accordance with the universal medieval practice Treasurers, Generals of Finance, and Generals in charge of the Mint had at first been entrusted with the judicial powers which were regarded as the essential complement of executive authority; but the growing complexity of business had presently necessitated a separation, and a distinction was made between Treasurers or Generals *sur le fait des finances*, who constituted the executive, and those *sur le fait de la justice*, who became the fiscal Judiciary. The judicial Generals were constituted as the *Cour des Aides* with jurisdiction in questions of 'extraordinary' finance; the judicial Treasurers were organized as the *Chambre du Trésor*, which dealt, subject to the appellate jurisdiction of the *Parlement*, with all questions arising out of the revenue of the demesne. A jurisdiction similar in character and extent was also conferred upon the *Chambre des Monnaies* in relation to the matters which came within the purview of the Mint. That another branch of demesne revenue was subject to a special jurisdiction has already been explained in the pages describing the forest administration.

The *Cour des Aides* inherited the judicial powers which had once belonged to the Generals of Finance. Under this court jurisdiction in the first instance was exercised by the courts of the appropriate local officials, *Élus* or *Grènetiers*, as the case might be. In most *élections* the judicial activities of the *Élus* were of no great importance, and their short and infrequent sittings were held in physical conditions which left much to be desired, proceedings having often to be conducted in the open market, because there was no court-house,

and the court-house, when it existed, being usually a squalid, bare, and unheated room. The supreme jurisdiction of the Cour des Aides was finally established by Louis XII by a decree of the year 1500. Conflicts of jurisdiction, said Louis, greatly impeded the collection of revenue, and it was essential that the powers of the contending tribunals should be more precisely defined. In relation to the *finances extraordinaires*, therefore, the Cour des Aides was set up as a supreme appellate tribunal with authority to determine all cases, civil and criminal, and with power to inflict the death penalty upon delinquents. Like the Chambre des Comptes of the capital, however, the central Cour des Aides had to put up with the existence of provincial rivals, for local Cours des Aides exercised jurisdiction at Rouen and Montpellier, and in several provinces lately annexed existing feudal tribunals had been permitted to retain a jurisdiction which greatly limited the authority of the central Cour des Aides. Moreover, though the court had been confirmed in a supreme appellate jurisdiction, its proceedings might at any moment be arbitrarily quashed either by the evocation of a cause to the Grand Conseil or by the setting up of an extraordinary commission.

Such, then, was the fiscal system in the stage of development which it had reached at the beginning of the sixteenth century, and the reader who has endeavoured to master its intricacies may feel some curiosity to learn its practical results. Precise information about the yield of taxation was sought at the time by Machiavelli, who was always eager to know how political institutions worked; but he was obliged to confess that his repeated inquiries had never elicited any satisfactory response, for he had invariably been put off with the evasive reply that the yield of taxation was what the King chose to make it. We dare not hope for complete success where Machiavelli signally failed, but we are, perhaps, more fortunate in having at our disposal figures which do enable us to hazard a guess as to the general trend of financial events during the reign of Louis XII. It would seem that the ultimate balance of revenue at the King's disposal amounted normally to about three and three-quarter million *livres*, of which two million were contributed by the *taille*, nearly a million and a half by *aides*, *gabelle*, and *traites*, and the resi-

due by the demesne. To keep taxation at the lowest possible figure was Louis XII's constant aim, and he set himself to achieve it by the sole means by which fiscal moderation may be compassed—by economy in expenditure, efficiency in administration, and the promotion of conditions in which the yield of taxation increases without any corresponding increase in the taxpayer's burden. He enforced public order and strove for security of life and property with a success which won general applause; simplified the procedure of the revenue tribunals and defined their jurisdiction; overhauled the mechanism of administrative control; suppressed illegal tolls and other seigniorial obstacles to economic progress; and disallowed unfounded claims to fiscal privilege. The yield both of the demesne and of indirect taxation improved steadily under the combined stimulus of growing prosperity and fiscal reform, and all such figures as are available give evidence of expansion. Thus the *aides*, which had produced 531,000*l.* in 1497, were bringing in over 650,000*l.* in 1514; the 'equivalent' of Languedoc, from which 73,400*l.* had been derived in Charles VIII's time, was farmed out for 116,925*l.* in 1515; the yield of the *gabelle* was almost doubled during the reign; and during the same period the demesne revenues increased by 50 per cent. When these figures are considered, and when it is remembered that the *taille* alone had been made to furnish over four million *livres* a year not very long before, it will not seem strange that the reign of Louis XII should have been looked upon as a golden age.

Though the fiscal system might work with tolerable success under favourable conditions, it was nevertheless indubitable that its defects were many and great. Chief amongst them, perhaps, was the amazing lack of anything approaching to equality. Nothing was uniform; no fiscal burden affected all subjects alike; no tax escaped the pernicious effects of political privilege and regional peculiarity. There were *pays d'états* and *pays d'élections*. There was the real *taille* and the personal *taille*. There were diversities in the *aides*, in the *gabelles*, and in the *traites*. And over and above all these there were the diversities arising from the social, personal, professional, and regional privileges and exemptions which conferred total or partial immunity upon clergy, nobles, universities, officials, trades, and localities. It was manifestly impossible in such

conditions that there should be so much as a semblance of fairness in the incidence of taxation.

Individually, too, the taxes were open to grave objection. What, for instance, could be said in defence of the *taille*, the mainstay of the fiscal system, when the persons who paid were confined to the unprivileged sections of the commoner class, and when the numbers and taxable capacity of these were continually being diminished, as ennoblements and promotions to judicial and other privileged office conferred immunity upon the well-to-do? Equitably borne, the *taille* might have been supportable, but the escape of the privileged made the burden of the unprivileged at once pecuniarily more onerous and socially more galling. The sense of injustice thus aroused was enhanced by the vicious system of assessment. So far from being measured by any scientific method, the liability of the taxpayer was fixed arbitrarily by a process of guess-work, based upon appearances and suppositions. Under such conditions the parochial assessor, even when honest, could be fair only by chance, and when he was dishonest, it came much too easy to him to do his friends a good turn or his enemies a bad one and improperly to lighten the burdens of those who might do him a good turn in return. From time to time attempts were made to cure these evils, but they did little more than 'uncover the sore they purported to heal', and despite all reforms the *taille* continued to be of a nature to ensure that the poor should be consistently fleeced.

Serious as were the defects of the *taille*, that tax was less odious and less injurious than the *gabelle*. The impost upon salt was grossly unfair as between rich and poor, because salt was an essential article of diet, which all must buy, no matter how much its purchase at inflated prices might derange the domestic economy of the peasant or the artisan. It was vexatious, because it subjected the taxpayer to domiciliary visits and other irksome methods of control. And since, despite all precautions, control remained imperfect, though rendered unduly costly, the Treasury derived no benefit commensurate with the burden imposed upon the people. Still more deplorable were the pernicious moral effects of a law which acted as a direct incitement to crime. A meek acceptance of official demands could scarcely be expected,

when regional diversities and enormous variations in regional prices offered unlimited opportunities for illicit gains. So huge were its profits that contraband trade attracted recruits from all classes and of nearly all ages; and all along each side of every internal frontier men, women, and children by the hundred were engaged in smuggling or in making clandestine purchases of smuggled salt. Supported by popular favour, and lucrative beyond calculation, the contraband trade grew and prospered; the legitimate trade itself could scarcely boast of a more thorough or efficient organization; and smugglers carried on their business in armed gangs with the greater impunity that the very officials, who should have suppressed the traffic, too often enjoyed a secret interest in its success.¹ It is true that penalties were savage, and were savagely enforced—the States-General of 1484 complained that in Maine, Anjou, and the Chartrain alone as many as five hundred persons had been condemned to death for alleged infractions of the salt-monopoly regulations—but no precautions, however thorough, and no repressions, however brutal, could counteract the manifold temptations of illicit trade.

I take leave of the fiscal system with a final observation upon one feature of it which ought not to be ignored. That the public finance of the country was controlled by the sovereign and his ministers was a fiction of the constitution: in fact it was controlled by a small group of bankers and financiers, who alone possessed the technical knowledge adequate to the conduct of the complex machine. It was these men, bound closely together by business connexions and family ties, who really directed fiscal policy; it was they who supervised the administration; and it was they who in times of crisis came to the rescue of the Government with their credit or their cash. When it is remembered that public finance was not subject to any form of Parliamentary control, and that there was not even the check of an adequate method of public accountancy, it will be realized that circumstances might well arise in which the power and influence of the financial coterie would be fraught with peril to the welfare of the State.²

¹ How far, if at all, a parallel may be found in the recent experiment in liquor control in the United States of America is a question which may best be left to the judgement of transatlantic readers.

² My debt to M. Dupont-Ferrier's *Études sur les institutions financières de*

I have now described, to the best of my ability, the political conditions of the kingdom over which Francis I was called to rule. The description will have been written in vain if it has failed to make it plain that the preceding age had been distinguished by three great, interconnected political movements. These movements were the growth of national unity, the development of centralization, and the persistent increase in the power of the Crown. As one writer has said, the triumph of the principle of unity is the great change which separates modern times from the Middle Ages; and, as another has declared, the transformation of the feudal kingship into the sovereign monarchy is the great fact in the history of the age. In that age political events, legal theories, and Gallican doctrines had conspired to further the King's advance. A great struggle for national existence had imposed the great ideal of national unity, and with the triumph of that ideal the old, disjointed France of independent fragments had given way to a new and compact State, in which the King was everywhere sovereign and suzerain, with an unquestioned right to universal obedience. The outcome of events was supported by the progress of theory. Whilst in the eyes of statesmen the King had been invested with power by the unanswerable logic of facts, in the eyes of the legists and churchmen he was as surely entitled to assume it by the irresistible influence of principles. By legal theory the King was Emperor in his kingdom: all power was derived from him; all justice emanated from him; his will was law. In Gallican theory he ruled by divine right, possessed unlimited power, and was answerable to God alone.

By successive steps the Crown had contrived to concentrate in its own hands every single one of the public powers which may be regarded as the distinctive attributes of sovereignty.

The King had become the supreme lawgiver. It was for him alone to make, to proclaim, and to interpret the laws; no custom and no feudal constitution could avail against

la France à la fin du moyen âge will be apparent to every reader of that admirable work. I may refer in particular to vol. i, pp. 20-1, 31-81, 126-82, and vol. ii, pp. 3-5, 19-21, 45-118, 130-7, 191-349. I have also consulted with profit his *Officiers royaux des bailliages et sénéchaussées*, especially at pp. 534-6, 542-613.

him; and the phrase, *si veut le roi, si veut la loi*, proclaimed that the laws were the expression of his Royal pleasure. It was, indeed, pretended that his legislative power was limited by the necessity to observe the 'fundamental laws' of the kingdom and to pay heed to the remonstrances of the Parlements, when those bodies should feel called upon to act as the defenders of the constitution; but the unsubstantial nature of the limitation was revealed by the fact that there was no machinery by which respect for the 'fundamental laws' could be imposed upon an inattentive monarch, and none by which the opposition of the Parlements could be sustained against a self-willed master.

The King was the fountain of justice. As King, he was the judge of all his subjects. The supreme and sovereign judge, whose jurisdiction was superior to all others, he gave decisions which were subject to no appeal, could evoke all causes in which he was interested, could put a stop to all proceedings, and could set aside all verdicts. To him alone, as Louis XII explicitly declared, did it belong to pardon and to remit. Throughout the country the judicial organization was dominated by the principle that justice emanates from the King; seigneurial, municipal, and ecclesiastical courts, though still subsisting, were all subordinated to the Royal tribunals; and popular participation in the administration of justice had been superseded by the exclusive jurisdiction of judges and magistrates, who were the nominees and the servants of the Crown.

The King enjoyed an executive and administrative power which had grown with the increase in his legislative and judicial authority, and he had now become the supreme head of a centralized administration, which extended its sway over every department of the national life. He created offices at his pleasure, and appointed to them whom he would; Councillors, civil servants, and revenue officers were selected by him, received his pay, depended upon his favour for promotion, and were removable at his will; and it was of particular significance that the Conseil Étroit, in which the destinies of the nation were decided, should be composed entirely of his nominees, and should wholly lack authority to oppose his will. The army of officials, who added to their own dignity and importance by every encroachment which

extended the authority of their master, had contributed in no small measure to the progress of centralization and the subjection of rival authorities; and bureaucracy was establishing itself as a feature of the national life fraught with far-reaching political and social results. 'Offices were coveted as much by the nobility and clergy as by commoners. Prelates and gentlemen, once small kings in their way, wanted nothing better than the honour of serving the Valois King, who had become their master. The educated *bourgeoisie*, the University graduates, had a like ambition—an ambition which, in their case, elevated and did not depress. All classes in the nation, and in each class the *élite* in particular, thus contributed to the growth of monarchical absolutism. As offices became more numerous, so did one part of the nation help the King to govern the rest. Social divisions there might still be, but it was becoming plain that from the political and administrative point of view there was now but one France.'¹

To the King also belonged the all-important power of the purse, for the right to levy taxes had become the exclusive prerogative of the sovereign. The feudal seigneur, who had once enjoyed the right, was now restricted to the levy of customary *aides* and *tailles*; but the King could impose what *tailles* he pleased. And this he could do of his own sole authority without any approbation from popular assemblies or any consent by those who were to be taxed. By an act of spontaneous condescension the consent of States-General might occasionally be asked for, but national assemblies were rarely convened, and provincial Estates, if they met at all, met only to execute the Royal mandate. 'Louis XI used to compare his kingdom to a fair field, which might be harvested at will. The Emperor Maximilian likened the King of France to the shepherd of golden-fleeced sheep, which might be shorn whenever he pleased. And when Francis I was asked by the Emperor Charles how much his kingdom brought him in each year, the King replied: "As much as I choose."'²

Lastly, the King wielded the military power in a State in which every trace of military feudalism had disappeared. The King alone might wage war, and the standing army,

¹ Dupont-Ferrier, *Institutions financières*, vol. i, p. 194.

² Tommaseo, *Relations des ambassadeurs vénitiens*, vol. ii, p. 142.

which drew his pay and obeyed his commands, was a docile instrument in his hands. The importance of this development was enhanced by the fact that the army was changing considerably in size and character. States-General might demand that the armed forces should be reduced, but disarmament was an impracticable ideal in a world distraught by dynastic ambitions and national rivalries, and Louis XII called to his colours many more troops than had ever marched under the standards of Louis XI. And not only was the army becoming much larger, but it was also undergoing a change in character, which from the political point of view was more perilous than a mere increase in size, for the soldiery were tending to become a military caste. Liberty was not endangered by a feudal host or by a *levée en masse* of the people; but it would be menaced, and menaced gravely, by the existence of a professional army, engaged, paid, and commanded by the King; and the evolution of such an army was the necessary consequence of contemporary developments in the art of war. With the general adoption of fire-arms fighting was ceasing to be a recreation for the knight, and was becoming a career for the professional. And in Francis I's kingdom that professional would be for the most part a foreigner, Swiss mercenary or German *Landsknecht*, with the foreigner's indifference to the liberties of the nation and the foreigner's insensibility to the popular appeal.¹

Looking at French institutions as they were when Louis XII died, and perceiving on the one hand a sovereign who was the source of law, the fountain of justice, the supreme chief of the executive, and the master of the legions and the purse, and on the other hand a people without political rights or any security against imprisonment and confiscation, we can see plainly enough what was now the destiny of the Crown. But though it is plain to us that absolutism was already so far established as to have become inevitable, the view was not so clear to political thinkers of the day, who concurred in the opinion that France was a sort of limited monarchy, in which the power of the sovereign was restrained and circumscribed by religious obligations, respect for justice, and the obligatory observance of the established usages, traditions, and 'fundamental laws' of the kingdom. The subjects

¹ Imbart de la Tour, *Les Origines de la Réforme*, vol. i, pp. 62-8.

of Louis XII had not been conscious of despotic authority: vestiges of old liberties had been permitted to survive, rights had been respected, and privileges had not been ignored. 'The reign of Louis XII was the triumph of the new imperialism, at once hereditary, theocratic, and Parliamentary, for the establishment of which the lawyers had striven. France was under the illusion that she was free, because these lawyers were themselves all-powerful. But the barrier was very fragile. When liberty ceases to be a right and is treated as a privilege, it has no more value than an unsigned note of hand. The time was approaching when the Crown would arm itself against the Parlement-men with the weapons which they themselves had forged—with its divine institution, its sovereign power, its material strength, and its popular appeal.'¹

¹ Imbart de la Tour, *op. cit.*, vol. i, p. 43.

XXXIII

ECONOMIC CONDITIONS

GENERAL CONDITIONS. MEANS OF COMMUNICATION

As in the realm of politics, so in the economic sphere, France in 1515 was in a state of transition from medievalism to modernity, her condition being at once reminiscent of past stagnation and prophetic of future enterprise. Into this condition we shall have to look in some detail, visiting the economic structure as it were story by story and room by room; but before entering upon this detailed inspection we may conveniently pause to take a bird's-eye view and to gain a general impression. When we are thus engaged, our gaze will be arrested by certain features of peculiar prominence. One of these is the change in the direction of commercial currents caused by the discovery of the New World. Another is the displacement of an urban by a national and international economy, and, as a consequence, the tendency to a change in the basis of the industrial system from the petty production of the domestic workshop to the larger scale of industry organized capitalistically. A third is the effect which the discovery of the New World was destined to produce upon the monetary position of the Old, and, through the monetary position, upon the general conditions in economics, politics, and social life. Yet another is the part played by means of communication in relation to economic affairs. These are matters of intricacy and importance, upon which much might be written by an author sufficiently furnished with knowledge and space. My more modest purpose is to look into them so far only as may seem expedient for the comprehension of the detailed economic survey which forms the subject of succeeding chapters.

The change in the direction of the commercial currents affected the economic life of France, though she did not feel its effects to the same extent as some other countries, for which the change was an event of the first importance. In the Middle Ages there were two main commercial streams, one from the North and the other from the East, bringing

necessaries and fashionable luxuries to markets which could not be supplied from local sources, but bringing them under difficulties of transport and subject to the restriction of a high cost. That state of things was radically altered by the maritime discoveries of the end of the fifteenth century, for the trade in the old commodities was enlarged by ampler and cheaper supplies, and a new trade was created by the introduction of commodities in which European markets had not previously dealt. Nor did trade change in volume only; it changed in direction as well. Transport from the East by a long and difficult land route could not compete with the facilities offered by sea carriage; Eastern silks and spices ceased to pass through the Levant to Italy; and Venice gave way to Lisbon and Antwerp. At the same time the economic importance of Spain became much enhanced by her possession of Mexican and Peruvian treasure. France felt the effects. In the south a new trade current, flowing from Spain and Portugal through Marseilles or Toulouse to the Lyons fairs, tended to displace the old current which had flowed northwards from the Italian entrepôt ports; Bordeaux began to enter into commercial relations with Lisbon; and northern France was taught to look to Antwerp as the source of its supplies.

The expansion of commerce led to developments in the industrial field by rendering possible the accumulation of capital. The industrial system of the Middle Ages had been accustomed to function with little assistance from capital, being based upon production by the small handicraftsman working to supply the limited requirements of the small closed market. Surplus products might be used to pay for imported commodities, but there was no approach to systematic production for the sustenance of an organized export trade. A change came in the fifteenth century, when the weaver who sold his own cloth was supplanted by the clothier, who took weavers, fullers, carders, and dyers into his employment, supplied them with wool, and disposed of the finished product wherever a market could be found. Production by artisans working for an employer with a view to distant markets and the outlet of an export trade was a new thing, and a thing destined to grow under the stimulus of maritime

discoveries, new markets, enlarged resources, and expanding trade. The same tendency towards a capitalistic organization was likewise observable in the new industries which arose in the same period. In printing and paper-making and in the manufacture of silk and glass it was necessary to purchase costly machinery, lay in stocks of raw materials, employ many hands, and disseminate output through world markets. The time was also one of technical improvements and mechanical devices to increase production, a notable instance being the use of hydraulic power in pumping out salt-works and mines, in extracting and crushing ores, in grinding corn, in fulling cloth, in expressing tanning materials, and in founding and casting iron. The part played by capital was not, perhaps, as yet very great, but the trend of economic development was in its favour, preparing the advent of a future in which it would reign supreme.

The monetary revolution for which the sixteenth century is notable is considered by expert opinion to be one of the great events in economic history, comparable in importance with the abolition of slavery or the far-reaching scientific discoveries and inventions of our own day, seeing that the consequences were felt, not only in the economic sphere, but also in the political and the social, and in all were noteworthy. Of such an event we cannot remain unobservant, even though its effects were not experienced in France to anything like the full extent in the period with which we are primarily concerned.

The years which preceded the accession of Francis I were a time of dear money and low prices: the purchasing power of money had never been so great, and goods had never been so cheap, as in the last quarter of the fifteenth century. The reason is to be sought in the state of the supply of the precious metals, which had become insufficient and tended to diminish. For two hundred years the main sources of supply had been the Eastern trade and African discoveries for gold and the output of German and Austrian mines for silver. The yield was such that the total stock of metals in Europe was small, and, since there was no paper money and not much commercial use of credit, a lack of monetary facilities was likely to be felt as soon as trade should begin to

expand. The expansion came towards the end of the fifteenth century, when peace and good government began to be reflected in a revival of agriculture, a development of industry, and an increase in the scale of commercial operations. The result was that money became scarce in relation to the volume of trade; scarcity enhanced its value; and, reckoned in terms of money, the price of commodities and of labour fell. Louis XII in his ordinances referred to the rise in the price of gold and silver, and complained of it as being disastrous. The disaster, if that were an apt description of it, was remediable by an augmentation of metallic stocks, and, since America had been found, the remedy was at hand. The discovery of the New World has been called 'the monetary salvation and resurrection of the Old World',¹ seeing that a copious stream began to flow where of late an exiguous trickle had seeped slowly through. It has been calculated that the mean annual production of the precious metals for the period 1521-44 showed an increase of 75 per cent. over that for the period 1493-1520; that production in 1544 was three times as great as production in 1493; and that the production of 1521-44 was in its turn eclipsed altogether by the output of the earlier years of the seventeenth century.² The effect upon the supply of the precious metals was such that the metallic stocks were trebled in a hundred years.

The new abundance of the precious metals necessarily affected the relation in which money stood to goods and services; the purchasing power of money declined, and prices and wage rates rose. The rise was accelerated and intensified by causes unconnected with the influx of metals, such as trade expansion, luxurious fashions, wasteful expenditure, and a lack of adjustment between the legal value of money as fixed by ordinances and the intrinsic value of the currency as determined by the commercial price of the precious metal which it contained. The depreciation of the *livre*, from whatever cause arising, brought a rise in prices expressed in *monnaie de compte*. The purchasing power of the *livre* is thought to have dropped from 55 francs to 42 francs during

¹ Shaw, *The History of Currency*, p. 61.

² Compare the significant figures of imports of treasure into Spain given by Professor Earl J. Hamilton in his *American Treasure and the Price Revolution in Spain, 1501-1650*, (1934), p. 34.

the first half of the reign of Francis I and from 42 francs to 32 francs during the second half. Corn cost on the average twice as much at the end of the reign as it had cost at the beginning. Taking the sixteenth century as a whole, the price of wool was doubled, the price of meat was more than doubled, wine rose from 3*l.* a hogshead to 12*l.*, eggs rose yet more sharply, and land fetched four times as much. In 1556 Henri II was constrained to grant an increase of official salaries by the great rise which had occurred in the cost of living.

The experience of the less fortunate countries in our own times has taught us something of the consequences of a depreciated currency—the suffering and upheaval which it entails, the complications which it introduces into business, particularly through the impossibility of arranging long-term contracts, the partial or utter ruin of the *rentier* class. Economic laws operate alike in every age, and the experience of the sixteenth century resembled that of the twentieth. The possessor of the fixed income suffered; the man with something to sell or to trade in gained. Chief among the sufferers were the members of the feudal nobility. The landowner was, indeed, advantaged, if his property was in hand, for he could then sell for a higher price or let at an increased rent; but not many of the nobles were in this position, since it had been the practice for centuries to let the land of the feudal estates to the peasants under a system of perpetual rents. Fixed in the totally different economic conditions of a remote past, these rents had long since ceased to bear much relation to actual values, and the monetary revolution of the sixteenth century gave them the *coup de grâce*. Dependent upon an income derived from immutable rents, the noble found that the money he received bought less and less and that the things he required cost more and more. He could not retrieve his falling fortunes by farming, because in times when labour had been hard to obtain his predecessors had remained in occupation of little but the curtilages of the castle or manor-house, and the contracts which they had made had dispossessed their successors in perpetuity. He could not engage in business, because a noble who stooped to trade was deemed to forfeit his rank. He had to save himself as best he could, and his methods of self-preservation produced political and social results of lasting importance.

The greater nobility turned to the King, accepting for themselves Great Offices, Governorships, military commands, and posts about the Court, and soliciting for their cadets a share in the stream of ecclesiastical preferment which was directed by the throne. Thus the change in the value of money contributed to that transformation of the feudal nobility into a Court *noblesse* which was destined to modify the whole aspect of French life. Upon the lesser nobility, too numerous and too obscure to become the objects of Royal patronage and the recipients of Royal bounty, the chill wind of the economic blizzard beat with withering force. A few of them were lucky enough to obtain minor posts in the army, the forestry service, or the local administration; some contrived to hang on in penury in their decaying manor-houses; but for the great majority the blow was mortal, and as a class the squirearchy abdicated into the hands of a *bourgeoisie* enriched with new wealth and hungry for the new dignity of landed possessions.

For the peasantry, who shared the land with the nobles, the new state of affairs was upon the whole advantageous. An increase in the cost of living did not greatly affect a class which in the main was self-supporting, and for them it was more than off-set by the lightened burden of ground-rents and the rising profits on agricultural produce. As a vendor of produce the peasant was in a much more favourable position than the artisan in the towns, upon whom the increase in the cost of living pressed severely, and who had nothing to sell but his labour. When prices rise, wage rates always tend to lag behind, and in the sixteenth century the lag inflicted real hardship upon the urban proletariat. In so far as wages were inadequate, the masters, who paid them, reaped an advantage, and that was not the only gain which the new conditions brought to the class to which the masters belonged. The age was one of unexampled prosperity for a *bourgeoisie* composed for the most part of master craftsmen, merchants, financiers, and bankers, and in those capacities most happily situated to turn the new conditions to account.

In a recent history of the French people the general result of the monetary revolution is thus summed up by an authoritative pen: 'The sixteenth century saw the sad spectacle of

old families so much impoverished as to be forced to sell their town houses or their ancestral seats to *nouveaux riches* eager to make a splash with their newly won wealth; it beheld cobblers rise rapidly to the position of financiers, and village beadies become gentlemen; it grew familiar with complaints about the dearness of provisions, with charges of cornering and profiteering, with denunciation by workmen of the greed of masters seeking to swell their gains by inadequate wage rates; it knew riots brought about by the rise in prices and the scarcity of supplies. The rise in prices, which the abundance of cash occasioned, profoundly affected the distribution of wealth, and deepened the growing division between the different social strata.¹

When compared with the influences which we have been considering, the part which means of communication played in economic life will appear less spectacular, but perhaps in fact it was not much less decisive. In looking back upon that life from amidst the miracles of modern invention an effort of the imagination is required to picture the conditions of a society in which means of communication were bad beyond belief. It may be that we are induced to magnify the dangers and difficulties of medieval travel by the fact that it is upon these features that contemporary accounts tend to dwell; but, when every allowance has been made, it will still seem remarkable that the people of those days should have moved about as much as they did, and still more extraordinary that they should have been able to transport goods. For there can be no doubt at all that in the conditions of those times locomotion was a difficult and dangerous undertaking. The roads were execrable: the Roman road had been allowed to fall into ruin; roads of later date were mere tracks across the fields, muddy and rutty, invaded by thorn and scrub, broken by morasses and quagmires; bridges were few in number and frequently unsafe; ferries worked irregularly or not at all; fords were apt to be dangerous; carriers were few; wolves and brigands were numerous. The rivers, which should have eased the traveller's task, were silted up with sand that was never dredged, foul with weeds that were never cut, and

¹ *Histoire de la nation française*, ed. Gabriel Hanotaux, vol. x, 'Histoire économique et financière', by Germain Martin, pp. 197-8.

obstructed by innumerable fishery weirs and mill dams. The sea was full of perils, when craft were small and frail, when instruments of navigation were primitive, when beacons, buoys, and lights did not exist, and when pirates and corsairs thrived and multiplied. Add to all this the fact that roads, bridges, rivers, town gates, and harbours were all subject to innumerable tolls, and it becomes possible to form some faint idea of the difficulty, danger, and expense of travel and transport.

It was a maxim of the medieval jurist that there were five sorts of road: first, the foot-path, with a width of four feet; next, the bridle-path, with a width of eight feet; then the road of sixteen feet, on which vehicles could pass one another; after that, the highway of thirty-two feet; and, finally, the Roman road, with a width of sixty-four feet. For the existence of any such precise and grandiose classification there was small justification in actual facts. If the Roman roads still existed, it was because their makers had built them to endure, and not because the Middle Ages had done anything to promote their endurance. Solid though they were, they had suffered grievously from the joint effects of continuous use and systematic neglect throughout ten centuries; and their very solidity had been their undoing in localities where scarcity of stone had tempted people to utilize them as a quarry for building-materials. Decayed, destroyed, and overgrown with vegetation, some had become wholly impracticable, and the state of many others was such as to make them scarcely serviceable. Nor, when still open, did they serve the needs of such new centres of population as had arisen off their routes, or satisfy the new demands of the medieval merchant and the medieval pilgrim. For the satisfaction of these needs and these demands it was necessary to look to the other sorts of road, and the prospect was such as might have daunted the most adventurous. Except where the Romans had laid down their highways the 'road' was usually a mere track, which was made, as a field path is made, by the passage of men, animals, and carts following the easiest route from one point to another, and which was by the same agency maintained, if the term maintenance may be applied to a process of which road-mending formed no part. In the neighbourhood of big cities the roads were sometimes

metalled for short¹ distances, and measures were taken intermittently to facilitate the passage of dangerous spots; but in the open country the road looked after itself. Sometimes by mistake, because its true course could no longer be distinguished, and sometimes of necessity, because it had become wholly impracticable, the old road would from time to time be given up for an entirely new route; and loud were the lamentations of the villages which then found themselves by-passed.

The quality of roads made and maintained in this fashion may readily be imagined. In a route created by circulation on the ground the very process of creation was also a process of destruction; the road suffering from the traffic which defined its course, the unmended rut became a ditch, and the unfilled hole grew into a quagmire. Many roads were usable only in summer, seeing that in winter, as a Venetian visitor complained, they were so muddy and swampy as to be impassable for horses; and even so late as Colbert's time the *Intendants* had to be apprised of the King's probable movements, so that holes might be filled up and obstructive vegetation be removed. 'Falling into holes so full of water that a man might almost be drowned in them; crossing marshes at the risk of getting bogged; sticking in the mud in the middle of a village; being upset by a driver's clumsiness; breaking a limb and looking death in the face—these during many centuries were normal incidents of travel.'²

In these conditions the man who travelled by land did not have much choice about the way in which he would move: he must of necessity go in the saddle. Carriages were very scarce; there were no more than three in all Paris in the middle of the sixteenth century;³ and the few that existed were rude, cumbersome vehicles, devoid of springs, in which it would have been intolerable to proceed at a trot, even had the state of the road permitted of such a rate of progress. It is true that a 'chariot' was used by Anne of Brittany in 1504, but that was on the special occasion of a State entry

¹ How short may be guessed from the fact that in 1553 the main approaches to so important a city as Orleans were paved only for two leagues.

² Avenel, *L'Évolution des moyens de transport*, p. 20.

³ At Bordeaux in 1588 there were four; all belonged to high officials or their womenfolk: Malvezin, *Histoire du commerce de Bordeaux*, vol. ii, p. 134.

into the capital, and until much after her time princesses and other great ladies habitually moved about in the saddle or on the crupper. This method of locomotion was not rapid, being conditioned by the powers of endurance of man and beast, and twenty miles was looked upon as a fair day's journey. Neither was it cheap, for apart from great lords and cavalymen there were not many who kept horses, and, since the animals of the postal relay service were not then at the disposal of private persons, it was necessary for the ordinary traveller to hire a mount for himself and probably at least one other animal for his servant or his baggage. A thriving business was done in the hiring out of hackneys and sumpter-animals.

Whenever possible, goods were carried by water, and heavy articles could scarcely be moved in any other way. When it was necessary to carry them by land, goods were usually transported on the backs of porters or of sumpter-animals—horses, donkeys, or mules. The mule played an important part, good mules costing nearly as much as horses, which were small and rather scarce. Goods which could not be moved on the backs of men or of pack-animals travelled in heavy carts, drawn by horses or oxen. Progress was slow; it took thirty-five days to carry goods in carts from Paris to Genoa; nor was the ox-cart a suitable means of conveyance for articles that were fragile or perishable or very heavy. It is on record that out of one consignment of six dozen mirrors only one dozen reached Paris intact; and when the town of Troyes wished to make an offering of fish for the use of the King and his Court, it was necessary to harness four horses to the cart, to ensure that the fish should arrive in edible condition. How difficult the sixteenth century must have found it to transport heavy goods overland we may guess when we find that even in the eighteenth century a statue of Louis XIV, bought by order of the States of Burgundy, got stuck in the mud on the way to Dijon, and spent more than twenty years in a shed, waiting for the road to be sufficiently improved to permit of its continued progress.

When merchants had recourse to transport by waggon, the hiring bargain was sometimes made the subject of a formal contract in the nature of a charter-party. Thus in 1535 a carrier of Terremonde, for himself and his partner, acknow-

ledged the receipt from two Paris merchants of certain specified goods, and undertook to deliver them in Paris in good condition within fifteen days, for which service he was to be paid a sum equal to 1 per cent. of the value of the consignment; for unpunctuality in delivery there was to be a penalty at the rate of 2*s.* per 100*l.* for each day's delay.¹

In spite of difficulties people contrived to move about, and in the worst periods there was an intercourse between different regions, which pilgrimages and fairs helped to promote. As society developed and commerce increased, the intercourse became more active and the need for the re-establishment of means of communication more acute. Roads were repaired, bridges were reconstructed, and ferries were reopened, sometimes by churchmen with the alms of the faithful, sometimes by seigneurs with the yield of tolls or by the help of *corvées*, sometimes by civic authorities with municipal funds, and sometimes by companies of merchants incorporated for the purpose of river conservancy. From an early date the King set an example in his demesne, and, as his power increased, he undertook the task of co-ordinating effort and suppressing abuses. The result, if not brilliant, was yet appreciable, for by the middle of the sixteenth century, as we learn from a contemporary road-book based upon the reports of messengers, merchants, and pilgrims, France possessed no less than fifteen thousand miles of practicable roads; three important routes connected the north with the south; paved ways radiated from Paris and some other big towns; and districts were even to be found in which a regular service by carrier had been established. Despite defects, the roads were in frequent use, the gentry of those days being constantly on the move under the attraction of a peripatetic Court, and the merchant travelling often and comparatively far afield to visit fairs and markets and to interview correspondents. Thus the merchants of Rennes were accustomed to visit Rouen, Paris, Bourges, and Lyons; and four times a year a party of them journeyed to Flanders, to sell Rennes woollen goods and Vitré canvas and to acquire stocks of spices, haberdashery, and hardware. Another Breton merchant, with correspondents in most parts of France, made a practice for thirty years of paying an annual visit to Anjou,

¹ Goris, *Étude sur les colonies marchandes méridionales à Anvers*, pp. 140-1.

Poitou, and Normandy, the Limousin, Auvergne, and Lyons. Moreover, frequent communication between its small towns was a necessity for a district which was self-supporting, as nearly all districts were, and such communication was possible, when roads, though not good, were at all events numerous. Defective communications are not inimical to the development of the smaller place, whereas a centralized road system is usually unfavourable to it, and is necessarily fatal to the interests of any town which is not included.¹

The frequency of rivers and the absence or inadequacy of means for crossing them were responsible for some of the difficulties which the traveller encountered. Through lack of technical knowledge in their builders, the construction of bridges was invariably bad: foundations were insecure; piles were out of alinement and unevenly spaced; bases were unduly massive, to make up for imperfect grounding; their excessive size obstructed the flow of water; and this defect, serious enough in itself, was aggravated by the prevailing practice of burdening bridges with floating mills. Stone bridges were few; in the sixteenth century the capital itself possessed but one; and the great majority of bridges, including those in the large provincial cities, were wooden structures, needing regular inspection and constant repair, which they did not as a rule receive. Flood, fire, and decay took a heavy toll of them. There had once been a bridge at Bergerac, and it had offered the only means by which the Dordogne could be crossed in that locality; having been carried away by a flood in 1444, it was replaced by a ferry, which served till 1502, when a bridge of boats was made; this in turn was replaced a few years later by a bridge in wood and stone; and that structure lasted till 1568, when it was destroyed by fire. At Tours in 1504 a single inundation carried away no less than five minor bridges, and inflicted damage upon the great bridge over the Loire. The bridges of the capital told the same sad tale of incompetent supervision, ineffective maintenance, and consequent collapse. The oldest of them was the Grand-Pont, occupied by the goldsmiths and money-changers; ill repaired in the fifteenth century, it perished, and was replaced by a ferry. The Petit-

¹ Dupuy, *Histoire de la réunion de la Bretagne à la France*, vol. ii, pp. 344-5; Latouche, *La Vie en Bas-Quercy du XIV^e au XVIII^e siècle*, p. 307.

Pont had been destroyed and rebuilt in 1408. The Pont Neuf, or Pont-Saint-Michel, built about 1380, was twice carried away by flood within a space of seventy years. Before the sixteenth century was out, the Pont-aux-Meuniers would founder with the loss of one hundred and fifty lives. Intense excitement was caused in Louis XII's time by the collapse and reconstruction of the Pont-Notre-Dame. This bridge, which had been built in wood in 1413 and was surmounted by a street of shops, had been in a precarious condition for many years when on 25th October 1499 it foundered under the weight of flood waters. It was at once resolved to rebuild it, and the supervision of the work was entrusted to a monk from Verona, who had built many bridges in Italy, and by whom a similar commission had lately been executed with success in France. The work took an immensely long time to complete, the first stone being laid on 25th March 1500, the bridge itself being finished in 1507, and the superstructure of shops completed in 1512. The new bridge was composed of six arches, which carried a paved roadway twenty feet wide; and, as with the old bridge which it replaced, the roadway was flanked with two rows of houses or shops, the new buildings being constructed in brick and stone and raised three stories high. The total cost, not including the houses, slightly exceeded a quarter of a million *livres*. The structure made a profound impression upon the minds of contemporaries, who were satisfied that it had no equal in any part of the world. 'The Pont de Notre Dame', wrote an Italian visitor, 'is as fine as anything in France. It is built of stone throughout, and is so massive and spacious that, although there are on either side houses in stone and sixty-eight shops, all alike, yet there is room for three carts abreast. Seeing shops and houses on either hand, you might suppose yourself to be in a street; indeed, this did actually happen to me when I first went to Paris, for after I had reached the bridge, I asked my way to it, and, when told that I was there, took the answer for a joke.'¹

¹ Tommaseo, *Relations des ambassadeurs vénitiens*, vol. ii, p. 598. The shops not going off as well as was expected, the Municipality had to reduce the rents: Bonnardot, *Histoire générale de Paris. Registre des délibérations du Bureau de la Ville de Paris*, vol. i, p. 205. For other entries relating to the bridge, see pp. 1-11, 14-17, and 28.

The Pont-Notre-Dame was in its own line the most ambitious project of the age, but it is not the only bridge-building effort to be placed to the credit of Louis XII's generation. With the return of security and prosperity the problem of river crossings began to receive an attention which had long been denied to it; bridges were built in stone at Lyons in 1506 and at Livron in 1513; and in many provincial centres, including Angers, Nevers, Troyes, Moissac, Agen, and Toulouse, new bridges were put up in the early years of the sixteenth century or old ones were reconditioned and made more serviceable. Unfortunately, however, the desire to provide sound bridges did not produce any marked improvement in structural methods, and for many years the new bridges continued to be vitiated by the persistence of the old defects. That the duration of the most pretentious structure might be lamentably uncertain is evidenced by an amusing story told of Louis XIV's time and of no less eminent an architect than Mansart. The great man had built a stone bridge at Moulins, and was exceedingly proud of it, being ignorant of the fact that the foundations were insecure. When the Lieutenant-General of the province came to Court shortly after its completion, Mansart instigated the King to ask for news of his bridge. 'Sire,' said the Lieutenant-General, 'I have no news of it since its departure, but I should suppose that by now it is at Nantes.' 'Eh?' said the bewildered King; 'what do you suppose that I am talking about? I asked you about the Moulins bridge.' 'Yes, Sire, it was the Moulins bridge which broke adrift the evening before I left, and went off bodily down-stream.'¹

Over and above the risks to which he was exposed from accidental causes the traveller had to face the dangers which were occasioned by the activities of highwaymen and brigands, for in the absence of any machinery for policing highways the prospect of easy plunder offered an irresistible temptation to unoccupied desperadoes, of whom even in the best of times the country was never able to rid itself. In the most orderly periods there were many stretches of road which were notoriously dangerous, and in a wood or a forest the most intrepid traveller could scarcely resist a feeling of apprehension. Of frequent occurrence though it was, robbery with violence

¹ Avenel, *L'Évolution des moyens de transport*, p. 27.

was a crime which seldom met with its due reward, for it was only when some brigand exceeded all bounds that society was impelled to take measures for its own protection. Thus the execution 'of a scoundrel who called himself a gentleman' is recorded as an unusual incident in the commonplace book of a Paris lawyer. 'He had some skill with fire-arms', wrote the diarist, 'and went about on a horse which was blind in one eye, but was capable of a good turn of speed; and he had on several occasions attacked companies of people in the country, killing some of them and compelling the others to stand and deliver their valuables.' It was not until he had perpetrated a series of such outrages that he was apprehended and brought to justice.¹

By the favour of fortune the traveller might elude the attentions of the highwayman, but it was the general opinion of the age that he could not hope to escape robbery at the hands of the innkeeper. Inns and taverns were numerous, for, as Macaulay has pointed out, the need for them is greatest when means of locomotion are worst; the more slowly men move, the more must they patronize houses of refreshment; and in sixteenth-century France the most hurried traveller moved very slowly indeed. Catering as these houses did for a clientele, of which the great lord and the rich merchant would often form a part, many must have offered accommodation of a tolerably satisfactory kind, and some were really good. A Venetian ambassador's secretary described to a correspondent how King Louis XII had given audience to the embassy in an inn, and added that the proceeding was not to be considered at all odd, because the inns were as good as any houses in the country. The chief complaint against them related, not to their accommodation or their services, but to their tariffs, their reputation for overcharging being deplorable. It cannot now be determined whether the reputation was deserved, or whether their charges were forced upon them by a steady rise in prices during a time of economic crisis, the inevitable effects of which their angry patrons failed to comprehend. Their custom was to add to the bill a supplementary charge, which they called 'la belle chère'. An ordinance of 1508 forbade

¹ 'Livre de raison de Me. Nicolas Versoris', ed. G. Fagniez in *Mémoires* of the Société de l'Histoire de Paris, vol. xii, p. 215.

this practice, but apparently with little result, as the prohibition was re-enacted at frequent intervals during the next fifty years. An edict of 1519 essayed the difficult task of prescribing an official scale of charges: the tariff was to be affixed in some public place; it was to be revised quarterly in accordance with the prices ruling in the nearest market; it was to be enforced by the Royal officials of the district; and Privy Councillors and Judges on their travels were directed to inquire into its operation and to report the result to the King. From the provisions of subsequent enactments it would appear that the innkeepers were clever enough to devise expedients by which they were enabled to defeat the objects of this legislation.¹

When roads are bad, waterways provide a cheap and convenient alternative, and France with her many rivers was fortunately circumstanced in this respect. Unhappily, however, it could be said, and with melancholy truth, that 'the history of transport by river is in large measure the story of the obstacles which were placed in the way of its realization'.² Weeds were left uncut; sand and silt blocked the channels; artificial islands were constructed, and water was diverted, to make fisheries; floating mills, chains, sluices, weirs, and dams obstructed the stream; the towing-path was narrowed or closed by invasive vegetation or the encroachments of adjoining owners. Would-be users of the waterways suffered, not only by the negligence of riparian owners, but also by their deliberate selfishness and reactionary opposition. The experience of the town of Chartres may serve as an example. Being alive to its economic value, Chartres desired a waterway connexion with Rouen and the sea, and the desire seemed reasonable in that a tributary of the Seine flowed past its walls. In the earlier years of the fifteenth century the Eure was not navigable above Nogent-le-Roi, but in 1443 the municipality of Chartres were authorized to deepen the river to Nogent, and when this work had been carried out and a towing-path made, 'ships, boats, and merchandise' were able to reach Chartres from the Seine. Not for long, however, for the new route was thought to conflict with

¹ Lyautey, *La Hausse des prix et la lutte contre la cherté en France au XVI^e siècle*, pp. 199-201.

² Aclocque, *Les Corporations, l'industrie et le commerce à Chartres*, p. 191.

the interests of the riparian owners, who attacked the workmen, destroyed the works, and seized the merchandise. This opposition, with its attendant campaign of violence, continued throughout the century, notwithstanding that Louis XI granted an express authority for the construction of a port at Chartres; and under the constant menace of actual and probable interruption the river traffic began steadily to decline. The times becoming more peaceful and authority being more respected, another effort was made, with the result that the Eure was once more rendered navigable, and boats laden with grain, wine, salt, fish, spices, leather, cloth, and dyes were able at last to discharge their cargoes regularly beside the quays of Chartres.

This happy result was characteristic of the age, for Louis XII's generation, which did much for the restoration of the highways, did more for the improvement of the waterways, so that the amelioration of fluvial routes may fairly be reckoned among the achievements of the time. There was ample scope for such activities in a well-watered land; nor could more convenient routes for the penetration of the country have been desired than nature had provided in such great rivers as the Seine, the Somme, the Meuse, the Loire, the Garonne, and the Rhône, each furnished with a network of tributary streams. In a time when road transport was slow, dear, and difficult the rivers provided invaluable links between the maritime ports and the centres of production and of consumption inland; and the extent of the use which was made of them, despite the defects in their navigability, was shown by the frequency with which 'ports' were to be found at considerable distances from the sea. Paris and Lyons both owed much of their prosperity to their fluvial connexions; Amiens was a 'port' for the discharge of metals and wool from England and the dispatch of cloth and wines; Chartres, Niort, Orleans, Blois, Saumur, Angers, Tours, Poitiers, Agen, Châlon, Saint-Jean-de-Losne all carried on an important river trade.

At the end of the fifteenth century most rivers suffered from the natural defects and artificial obstructions which have already been enumerated as the usual obstacles to navigability in the medieval stream. Louis XII, Francis I, and their contemporaries set themselves to find remedies.

We have already seen how Chartres dealt with the Eure. Two attempts were made to canalize the Clain between Vivonne, Poitiers, and Châtellerault. Anne de Beaujeu and her son-in-law, the Constable, improved the navigation of the Vienne from Châtellerault to its point of confluence with the Loire. Something was done to mend matters in the channels of the Vendée, Thouet, and Boutonne. The Sèvre, which was silted up, was dredged and deepened, and its banks were repaired. The city of Amiens broadened the Somme; in 1510 the Auron and the Cher were made navigable at the expense of Bourges; at Troyes from 1492 to 1500 the municipality occupied itself with the navigation of the Seine and the Barse, removing obstructions, digging new channels, and building a port. The banks of the Garonne were attended to in 1512; those of the Rhône were repaired at Tarascon in 1515. Despite the strength and rapidity of its current this river was the chief commercial route between the Mediterranean and the north, navigation on its confluent, the Saône, being prolonged to Port-sur-Saône notwithstanding a multiplicity of obstructive mills and dams. Dredging was also undertaken on a tributary of the Saône, the Ouche. Francis I dealt with the Sauldre. Projects were discussed for making the Allier navigable. In a few go-ahead places attempts were even made to establish an organized river service, boats being advertised to carry passengers on specified days at a fixed price, usually in connexion with pilgrimages or fairs. Such facilities were not often to be met with, however, and the usual practice was for a party of travellers or merchants to charter a boat privately at a price determined by bargaining.

Two great river systems received peculiar treatment, and deserve special mention—first, the Seine, which provided access to the sea for Rouen and Paris, Normandy and the industrial and agricultural districts of the north-east; and, secondly, the Loire, which gave a means of transit between the centre and the north and between the ocean and the provinces of the centre and the east.

In the conservancy of the Seine there was divided authority, the upper waters being under the control of the Hanse Parisienne in the capital and the lower under that of the Compagnie Normande with head-quarters at Rouen. The

Hanse Parisienne could lay claim to considerable antiquity, for charters of early dates confirmed its existing privileges, and authorized the levying of dues on laden boats for the purpose of defraying the cost of constructing new 'ports'. No corporate body in the capital was older or more distinguished than the Compagnie des Marchands de l'Eau de Paris, composed of rich wholesale merchants, who belonged to no particular trade, but supplied all trades with raw materials, and of the barge-owners and wine-merchants who brought the yield of the Burgundian vineyards to the markets of the capital. In the twelfth century the Hanse had acquired by Royal grant a monopoly of river transport within its area, which comprised all the waters of the Seine and its affluents above Mantes bridge; and this monopoly ensured that within the area no goods could be borne by water but by a member, or under a member's licence. Since the fourteenth century its governing body, the Prévôt des Marchands and Échevins, had gained much further importance by becoming the municipal magistrates of the capital. By Louis XII's time the transport monopoly had been destroyed, but the municipal dignities were retained.

From Mantes to the sea a similar monopoly of navigation had at one time been enjoyed by the Compagnie Normande, the counterpart and hated rival of the Parisian Hanse. The Norman company, like the Parisian, had been able to exclude all strangers from its port and to prevent all competition within its area; and below Mantes bridge no one, even were he a member of the proud company of the capital, might venture to utilize the Seine except in association with a member of the Norman company and upon payment of specified dues into that company's coffers. Such relations were pregnant with trouble, and in the middle of the fifteenth century, when the incessant friction between the two companies had become a public nuisance, Charles VII had abolished the privileges of both by a decree which his son later enforced upon a reluctant Parlement. Thereafter, the Hanse Parisienne, though it continued to exist, was shorn of its former glories, and became a pale wraith of its old resplendent self.

The 'Corporation des marchands fréquentant la rivière de Loire et autres fleuves descendans en icelle' was an association

of a different sort: it was later in origin, and its privileges were not monopolistic. No river in the kingdom could rival in economic importance the great fluvial route which provided a highway for half the trade of France. On the face of its waters there travelled in unending procession the salt of Locmaria and Poitou; the oranges, leather, and wool of Portugal and Spain; the fish, metals, and ores of the British Isles; the textiles of Flanders, Normandy, Brittany, Champagne, Angers, Poitiers, Arras, Issoudun, and Bourges; wines from Burgundy, Anjou, Touraine, and Orleans; slates from the Angers quarries; spices and Eastern merchandise; furs from the north; Provençal oils; the dyes of Toulouse; the iron of Languedoc, Roussillon, and Dauphiné; the soaps of Marseilles; the silks and luxury products of Venice and Lombardy; the coal of Forez; the building materials and pottery of Auvergne, Nivernais, and Bourbonnais; the wool, the corn, and the cattle of Berry and Beauce; and the combs of Limoges. Important though it was, the Loire presented many difficulties, its navigation being interfered with in an unusual degree by natural defects, artificial obstacles, and the onerous burden of seigneurial tolls. The Loire and most of its tributaries brought down sand, which blocked the channels, if not removed by constant dredging; navigation was further impeded by an unusually rich crop of mills, fisheries, dams, and sluices; interruptions of the towing-path were frequent; and no river system in all France suffered to the same extent from the costly and vexatious multiplication of seigneurial tolls. It was alleged by the merchants who used it that the whole river system could show more than two hundred of these expensive obstacles. Possibly this was an exaggeration, for people with a grievance are apt to overstate their case; but it is undoubted that at the beginning of the fifteenth century the tolls considerably exceeded one hundred in number.

Confronted with this situation, the merchants who used the river and the boatmen who provided them with means of transport decided to form an association for the protection of their common interests, somewhat in the style of a modern Chamber of Shipping. The association never enjoyed, and never aspired to possess, the monopolistic privileges of the ancient corporations which controlled the navigation of the

Seine; but in the course of time it received statutory recognition and acquired statutory powers. Letters patent of 1499 declared that on all navigable rivers the merchants who used them might establish a common purse, and impose dues for the protection and defence of trade, on the model of the fund which had been created by the merchants frequenting the Loire. The hint was taken, and similar bodies sprang up all over the country. The Garonne, Lot, Tarn, and Aveyron came under the control of an association, formed on the Loire model, with officers at Bordeaux, Agen, and Montauban, and with a branch at Bergerac, which took charge of the Dordogne. Another syndicate is found in operation on the Saône in the sixteenth century, the date of its creation not being known. Rich, powerful, and active, these associations performed a valuable service in ameliorating the conditions of transport on the river systems under their care. Ports were constructed; channels were dredged and buoyed; Royal edicts were enforced; seigneurs were checked in attempts to set up obstructions or enforce illegal tolls, river pirates and brigands were extirpated; and attention was paid to the clearance and maintenance of the towing-paths, which were essential to the punctual transport of perishable articles and such other commodities as for one reason or another were unable to wait for a favourable wind. And not less valuable, perhaps, than these practical services was the moral effect of fortifying every little trader and every humble boatman with the knowledge that he had behind him for his protection and support the resources of a society which the haughtiest seigneur must hesitate to defy.

With their welfare entrusted to these conservancy bodies the rivers were more fortunate than the roads, whose crying need had long been the establishment of regional highway authorities or a central Ministry of Transport. Those were luxuries which the Middle Ages had not envisaged, and which, if envisaged, could never have been procured in face of the dispersal of authority which characterized the feudal régime. As power was resumed by a reinvigorated Crown, attempts were made to remedy an obvious deficiency and to protect the travelling and trading public. Louis XII felt himself able to take still more effective steps. Tolls were inquired into; those of improper origin were suppressed;

and the yield of such as were retained was directed to be applied to its legitimate purpose in the maintenance of bridges, rivers, and roads. In 1508 the general supervision of highways, ports, and harbours was entrusted to the four Royal Treasurers, the proceeds of Royal tolls being allocated to purposes of maintenance; and where a private toll-owner ignored his liability, the Treasurers were empowered to execute necessary repairs at the defaulter's expense. Invested with these powers, the Treasurers remained the chief highway authority until relieved of their duties upon the creation of *Intendants*.

Prejudicial though it was to the interests of the traveller and the trader, the absence of highway authorities was not nearly so bad as the unwelcome presence of the ubiquitous seigneurial toll-gatherer. The toll was a due charged for entrance to a local market, and a network of tolls was one of the baneful legacies from the age in which feudalism had arrogated to itself regalian rights in the face of an impotent Crown. When there was no effective central authority to resist usurpation, it was easy for the feudal lord to multiply exactions, and to divert to his own purposes the dues which could only be justified, if justified at all, by a conscientious devotion to the maintenance of means of communication. The seigneur cared nothing about the condition of road or river; his single interest in a route was that by traversing his demesne it should enable him to levy tribute on the traveller and merchant, their cattle, carriages, and goods. The upshot was that at the entrance to every seigneurie a fresh barrier was encountered. 'Seigneurs built strongholds on the roads, on the passes, on the waterways, so that no one should be able to pass without paying a due. . . . The dues differed in name, in nature, and in importance, according to the places in which they were levied and to their ownership by King, seigneurs, churches, or communities. New dues were created alongside the old, for pretexts were never lacking—guarantees of safe travel for men and goods, construction, maintenance, and repair of roads and bridges, protection of local trade against foreign competition, provision of buildings for use as stores.'¹ Every few miles the trader had to stop, await the pleasure of the toll-owner, and pay for permission to pro-

¹ Bourquelot, *Étude sur les foires de Champagne*, p. 178.

ceed. When chains blocked the arches of a bridge, he had to pay to have them lifted; when mills obstructed them, he had to pay for horses to tow him through. There were more than a dozen tolls on the Seine between Paris and Rouen. On the river system of the Loire there were above one hundred; on that of the Rhône and the Saône sixty; on that of the Garonne seventy. Some alleviation of the burden was subsequently effected by the legislation of the Crown, but not to such an extent as to make the burden at all easily supportable.

Infinite in number, the tolls were also infinite in variety. In no two places was the same tariff in force; in some of them tribute was levied in cash, in others it was exacted in kind; in some it was levied on articles according to their number, in others it was assessed on their weight; and the weights and measures used in one place differed from those used in another. Tolls were generally let out to farmers, and the farmer, after the fashion of his kind, was rapacious, dishonest, and oppressive. Frequently he combined the business of an innkeeper with the farming of the tolls, and then to secure custom from the lightermen he would deliberately hold up cargoes, refusing to accept declarations of quantities and demanding that the cargoes should be unloaded. Subjected to treatment of this sort, goods took a fortnight to cover a distance which should not have occupied more than a few days; perishable stuff was wasted; markets were lost; and an enormous increase in price was required to cover the additional cost. Between Nantes and Orleans prices were increased by a half; between Harfleur and Paris they were more than doubled; goods which had cost 10*s.* in Burgundy came to 18*s.* at Lyons and to 25*s.* at Aigues-Mortes. And these were modest increases compared with the huge additions which duties, tolls, and transport together were capable of bringing about. A box of haberdashery consigned from Paris to London had to pay the *imposition foraine*, the *droit de rêve*, and the *droit de haut passage*; fifteen tolls between Sèvres and Pont-de-l'Arche; at Rouen the local dues known as the *droits de vicomté*; the Admiralty lading licence; the cost of freight; pilotage dues in the Seine and the Thames; and the cost of loading and unloading. Since all were reflected in the price charged to the ultimate purchaser, there seemed

to be a fair ground for inducing in the English shopper a belief that 'it is better to buy British'.

Letters patent of the fourteenth century had laid down that there could be no tolls but by Royal permission: immemorial possession would be regarded as evidence of a Royal grant; all tolls not founded upon such possession were to be deemed illegal. The regalian character of tolls was thus asserted as a principle, but in practice during the subsequent period of anarchy and disaster abuses became common, for then seigneurs increased old tolls, imposed new ones, and 'substituted exaction for legality, fraud for justice, and pillage for protection'.¹ Gathering strength again, the Crown in due time reasserted the old principle, and that principle finally triumphed, exemplifying the growing interference of the Crown with the rights of the seigneurs, and strikingly illustrating its centralizing proclivities. From the middle of the fifteenth century there was a string of edicts, of which the effects may be summarized as follows: every toll-gatherer must prove his title and produce his tariff under pain of suspension; new and illegal tolls were to be abolished, old ones were to be reformed; at every place of toll a tariff was to be exhibited, showing the goods chargeable and the duties demanded; seigneurs exacting tolls were required to dedicate the best channel to navigation, to keep it buoyed and dredged, and to maintain towing-paths of standard width; and the authority of the Parlements was substituted for the arbitrament of prejudiced or intimidated local tribunals in litigation relating to tolls.

With the establishment of a postal service the age introduced an innovation surpassed only by the contemporary invention of printing in the magnitude of its influence upon politics, commerce, and social relations. In the days when there had been no such system, the lack of it had been supplied imperfectly by private enterprise, letters and parcels being dispatched as occasion served. Great seigneurs and ecclesiastical dignitaries employed their own couriers; and so did the wealthier bankers and merchants, for whom means of rapid communication about business affairs and the prompt receipt of accurate information about current events were

¹ Mantellier, *Histoire de la communauté des marchands fréquentant la rivière de Loire*, Société Archéologique de l'Orléanais, *Mémoires*, vol. vii, p. 47.

prime necessities. Apart from the occasional use of these private messengers, sometimes sanctioned as a special favour, the ordinary man enjoyed few facilities. Here and there municipalities employed couriers for intercommunication in the public interest, but the range of these couriers was short, their departures, which depended upon demand, were irregular, and their speed was variable, being governed by the means of locomotion available. The nearest approach to a postal system was to be found in the service of messengers which the Universities had organized to enable their students to maintain a connexion with their families in the provinces. The honesty of the University messengers, ensured by their semi-official status, and the comparative regularity of their journeys created a demand for their services far beyond the bounds of the undergraduate world, and the dispatch by them of letters, parcels, and remittances became a recognized means of communication. It did not, however, have the effect of making correspondence either cheap or quick. Reckoned in modern money, the cost of a letter sent from one French city to another might be any sum from one pound to five; and the time occupied in transit was considerable, though there was a perceptible tendency to acceleration, as means of communication improved. At the beginning of Louis XII's reign a letter sent in summer from Brussels took forty-four hours to reach Paris, sixty hours to reach Blois, and ninety-six hours to reach Lyons, the times in winter being from half a day to a day longer. At the end of the reign the service was quicker by several hours on the short journeys and by as much as a whole day on the longer. At the best, however, the receipt of news by the provinces continued to be belated, and for periods which seem strangely long they remained in ignorance of the happening of important events. Thus the death of Louis XI, which occurred in August, was not known in Bas-Quercy till the end of September; nor was it until the end of May that the district learned that his successor had died on 8th April.

The establishment of a system of Royal posts was suggested to the mind of Louis XI by the example of the Universities. If an organized service of messengers was required by a parcel of students, much greater were the needs of a Government called upon to preserve contact with a whole kingdom, aye,

and with many foreign lands beyond its bounds. Between the King and his provincial and diplomatic representatives there passed to and fro a stream of letters, messages, and reports, of requests for instructions, of orders and commands; the stream never ceased, and there were times when couriers would come in every hour. The chance provision of man and horse could not be satisfactory to a ruler who knew that it was 'very necessary and important to the welfare of the State that he should receive news promptly from all sources, and, as occasion might demand, be able to communicate his own'. He wanted a system which should be rapid and sure; and speed and certainty required an organized service, functioning without intermission alike by day and by night. An edict of 1464 satisfied this need. At regular intervals on all the highways there were to be stationed *maîtres de poste*, receiving the King's pay, and bound to him in loyal duty; and each was to keep four or five horses of light build, well caparisoned, and able to cover at a gallop the distance to the next post. The *maîtres* were to be ready at all times to provide a mount for any person employed upon the King's service and franked by their official superior, the Grand Maître des Coureurs de France. They were also to be ready to carry all dispatches and letters sent by the King, or by his Governors, or by other Royal officers, when certified by the Grand Maître. Facilities might be afforded to the couriers of foreign powers when furnished with permits from the Grand Maître, but the use of relay horses by private persons was rigorously prohibited, the King not intending that 'the convenience of the said establishment should be for any other end than his own service'. Therefore, though the Royal post had thus been inaugurated, there was not as yet any extension of facilities for the public at large.

By sea, as upon land, the sixteenth century had to endure a system of communications still characterized by expense, slowness, and danger, though beginning to show some indications of better things to come. The sailor of the Middle Ages had plied his trade in small and unseaworthy craft, and in these had confronted perils made the more formidable by his total lack of efficient aids to navigation. He rarely saw a beacon or a buoy; his compass, if he had one, was not reliable; and his untrustworthy maps performed few of the

functions of a chart. His method of progression was therefore to hug the shore, anchor at night, and lie to in bad weather. When the perfecting of the compass enabled the mariner to go out of sight of land, and thereby ushered in the era of maritime discovery, a series of changes soon ensued. Not only did maps begin to give information at once more extensive and more precise, but publications in the nature of modern 'Sailing Directions' also helped to ease the navigator's task. The design of ships underwent modification, the shipbuilder evolving new types of sea-going vessel to meet the requirements of a more adventurous age. The carrack, massive in build and weighty in armament, was equipped to resist the assaults of man and to withstand the violence of the elements. The longer and more slender galleon had a better turn of speed. Less seaworthy than her larger sisters, the caravel combined a fair turn of speed with a considerable carrying capacity, and possessed the further and notable advantage that, being of light draught and easy to handle, she could ascend rivers to the fluvial 'ports' at which the age expected its sea-borne cargoes to be discharged. The introduction of these types did not displace the smaller vessels, and some long-distance transport as well as most of the coasting trade was done in ketches of 50, 60, or 100 tons, which might be slower and less capacious than the caravel, but which could be built more cheaply, maintained more economically, and handled with greater ease, whilst their carrying capacity was adequate to normal demands. Rapidity of transport was not in any event to be expected of the cargo ship of the period, which would probably encounter long delays whilst awaiting favourable winds, and was almost certain to be held up once more whilst waiting to take its turn beside the exiguous quays.

Whether his ship was large or small, the calling which the seaman of the sixteenth century followed was still perilous, and it was upon his own skill and resource that he still depended in the main to escape its dangers. Few channels were buoyed; few coasts were lit; and, when beacons did exist, they were often worse than useless. Not many routes were more frequented by cargo ships than the approach to Bordeaux, and not many were more difficult, so that the precautions taken there may not unfairly be regarded as a

measure of the assistance which the age rendered to its shipping. Though specially formidable by reason of variable currents and shifting sandbanks, the Gironde had few beacons or buoys. At the mouth of the river there was, indeed, a light, but its behaviour was so capricious that it was a source rather of peril than of protection. Frequently it was left unlit, and, when lit, it was inefficient. The illuminant was provided by pine-branches kindled on a stone floor; there being little protection against wind and rain, the light was often obscured by smoke or extinguished altogether; difficulty of communication with the mainland led to exhaustion of fuel supplies; funds were scarce; and the keepers were incurably negligent.

Yet it was not from storm and tempest, nor from uncharted seas and coasts devoid of sea-marks, that the greatest dangers arose to those who occupied their business in great waters. Piracy—ubiquitous, unceasing, audacious—was the curse of all the seas; and confusion became worse confounded when the Governments of injured parties, being unable to obtain redress, issued letters of marque to their merchantmen and launched them upon a career of legalized depredation. The prevalence of piracy contributed to the persistence of high freights. Either the merchantman must voyage in convoy under armed escort, bearing her share of the cost, or she must be armed and manned for self-defence, when her working costs were increased and her carrying capacity was diminished. In either event her owners must recoup themselves by higher charges for the services which they rendered in the transport of merchandise, and this circumstance goes some way to explain the cost of freights.

In connexion with the ports frequented by shipping the feature calling chiefly for remark is the importance then possessed by places which are now wholly deserted or are visited at the most by a fishing-smack or two or an occasional coastal tramp. The explanation is to be found in the difficulty of land communications: a district must conduct its trade, not through the best harbour, but through the nearest; and access to the interior was much facilitated by the use of navigable rivers. As a result, there were many active 'ports' at considerable distances from the sea, and along the coasts the cargo ship would put in to load or unload wherever a

tolerable anchorage could be found. Boulogne and Étaples traded with England and the Low Countries, and Saint-Valery-sur-Somme provided an anchorage for the ships of Spain, Brittany, and the Low Countries which came to load cargoes of corn purchased in the busy market of Corbie. At the end of the fifteenth and beginning of the sixteenth century the shipbuilding yards of Abbeville turned out vessels of 70 to 100 tons; its fishermen caught the herring in Norwegian waters; and its scores of master mariners sailed to England and the North and to Spain and the Mediterranean. Tréport, Dieppe, Fécamp, Honfleur, Harfleur, Caen, and Barfleur competed with Rouen for the shipping trade of Normandy. Dieppe, which had established a chain of trading posts in Morocco and Guinea in the fourteenth century, but had afterwards lost them to the Portuguese, enjoyed a revival of prosperity at the end of the fifteenth century, when she had commercial relations with England, Spain, Portugal, and Africa. The Dieppois liked to believe that their mariners had reached America before ever Columbus sailed. At Harfleur the port was beginning to silt up at the beginning of the sixteenth century, but 'the noble town of Honfleur', its *vis-à-vis* across the Seine estuary, retained some of its ancient importance, its gallant sailors and adventurous skippers going to Brazil and perhaps also to the Cape of Good Hope in Louis XII's time and beginning to fish on the Newfoundland banks when the sixteenth century was as yet but young. Hence, after the lapse of a hundred years, Champlain would set sail on his way to found Quebec. Rouen was the second town of the kingdom, and as the great port of the Seine it was the natural outlet for the busy agricultural and industrial district of which it was the centre. It was not unusual for as many as two hundred ships to be present at one time in its port; but the vessels, if numerous, were small, for the shallow channels of the Seine rendered the place inaccessible to ships of any considerable draught. Rouen traded with the Low Countries, the British Isles, Germany, Russia, Finland, Norway, Spain, Portugal, and Italy, exporting Caen stone, corn, wine, fruit, cloth, linen, ironmongery, timber, and dyes, and importing English coal, metals, and wool, hides from Portugal, Spain, and Germany, furs from Germany and the North, salt fish from England,

Holland, and Denmark, wines and oils from Portugal and Spain, almonds from Italy, pepper from Guinea, spices from the East, and wax and honey from southern France.

On the coasts and rivers of Brittany Saint-Malo, Lannion, Saint-Pol-de-Léon, Morlaix, Le Conquet, Brest, Douarnenez, Audierne, Quimper, Penmarc'h, Vannes, and Saint-Nazaire vied with Nantes, the great port of the Loire, for the trade of the province in salt and wine, corn and cattle, linen and hemp. Gaining by the union of Duchy and kingdom, Saint-Malo was becoming prosperous at the beginning of the sixteenth century; English ships were wont to put in, to load at its quays, and the town carried on a considerable trade with Spain. From its harbour Jacques Cartier, a son of the place, would presently set out to explore the Gulf of St. Lawrence. Brest was also a port of call for English ships, and handled cargoes of salt fish. South of Brest, on a rock-girt promontory where ocean rollers hurl themselves upon an iron coast, there now stands, forlorn and ruinous, the shrunken village of Penmarc'h. In all Brittany no port was more active in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. It had a prosperous fishery, an important trade in hake and mackerel, an active coasting trade, an extensive commerce with Spanish ports in corn, cattle, linen, and hemp, and the lion's share of Breton business with the Low Countries. The ancient importance of Penmarc'h is shown by its many churches, built with money given by its sailors, who caused their vessels to be depicted on the walls. In their heyday these churches witnessed to the piety, the affluence, and the professional pride of the seafaring population, and they stand now in their decline a melancholy monument to departed greatness.¹

¹ I have not seen Penmarc'h since my undergraduate days, but since the spot, as I remember it, was not adapted for the purposes of a modern watering-place, I assume that it has undergone no material change in the intervening years. Its inhabitants, when we saw them, were strange in their *patois*, in their dress, and in their physical appearance, and seemed to have little affinity with the normal Breton type. It is said that the remoteness and isolation of their village has led to a debasement of stock through repeated inbreeding. When we visited the place, the sense of old, forgotten, far-off things evoked by these primitive people and their derelict village was intensified by the proximity of a powerful modern lighthouse, which had recently been built upon the neighbouring point, and to which, so the keepers told us, we were the first English visitors. Beside its entrance was an inscription recording, if

On the coasts of the south-west and the south, as on the northern and western shores, the trade currents flowed through a large number of lesser ports. On the coast of the Bay of Biscay no place could compare in importance with the great port of Bordeaux, but a considerable volume of trade went to make up the activities of the island ports of Normoutier, Oléron, and the Île-de-Ré, the Poitevin river ports of Saint-Jean-d'Angély and Niort, and the harbours of La Rochelle, Bourgneuf, Brouage, Bayonne, and Saint-Jean-de-Luz. Niort and Saint-Jean-d'Angély traded with the Low Countries, the Flemings coming thither to load wine and salt for their own consumption and for carriage to Norway. La Rochelle, with a fine natural harbour and a low scale of dues, was the outlet for the wine and salt of Poitou and Saintonge, and maintained commercial relations with England, the Low Countries, and the North, and with Spain, Portugal, and the Mediterranean. The roads of Brouage were the most sheltered on the ocean coast. Deserted by shipping when they became silted up at the end of the sixteenth century, they were once a busy entrepôt for the trade in wine and salt, which the English, the Flemings, and the merchantmen of the Hanseatic League came to load for the British Isles, the Low Countries, and the Baltic lands. Bayonne and Saint-Jean-de-Luz were well served by their intrepid Basque sailors, who took an active part in the maritime adventure of the age. Both places exported Gascon pitch, resin, and turpentine, and maintained a carrying trade with Flanders, Portugal, and Spain. Unhappily for Bayonne, its port was being menaced by a change in the course of the Adour, and would presently be unable to accommodate vessels of more than fifty tons. As a result of that misfortune the trade of the place was tending to pass to Bordeaux.

That thriving port enjoyed an undisputed supremacy on the Biscayan coast. More than six hundred vessels a year

I recollect its terms aright, that it had been erected by the heirs of Marshal Davout in the hope that loss of life in battle might be redeemed by the saving of lives from the perils of the sea. No place could be deemed more apt to furnish fulfilment of this humane aspiration. The story of Penmarc'h is more than a memory of departed greatness; there is besides a living and moving tale of storm and wreck, and of the instant, unquestioning response of heroic valour.

were attracted to a place which was an active commercial centre, the pivot of a great river system, and the natural entrepôt for Gascony, Languedoc, Aquitaine, and all the provinces of the south-west. Bordeaux had known some lean years when her reunion with France had deprived her of the prosperity which she had enjoyed during the English occupation; but Louis XI had set himself to mend matters, and her own enterprise and natural advantages had done the rest. At the end of the Hundred Years' War the port had been closed to English shipping, the English commercial houses had shut their doors, and trade had been dislocated generally by the results of political change. To restore its prosperity was the care of Louis XI, who accorded many privileges—exemption from impositions and restrictions for alien residents, exemption from river dues for wines and goods, and the re-establishment of free fairs, which had been given up. Encouraged and assisted by Royal favours, Bordeaux recaptured its lost trade, and at the accession of Francis I the place was in active commercial relations with England, the Low Countries, Germany, Portugal, and Spain. There passed through the port the cloth of Languedoc, the grain of the Garonne valley, iron from Périgord, hemp from Navarre, prunes from the south, and timber, charcoal, tar, resin, and turpentine from the pine woods of Les Landes. Upon none of these, however, was the prosperity of the place built up, but upon salt, fish, wine, and dyes. To the fish trade the richest quarter of the city owed its wealth, Bordeaux importing haddock from Brittany, salmon from Ireland, herring from Normandy and the British Isles, and sardines from the French and English Channel ports, and distributing its imports to Guyenne, Languedoc, Angoumois, Poitou, the Limousin, and parts of Spain. Important though it was, the fish trade was of less account than the trade in wine. To the greatest of all French wine markets the buyers of England and the Low Countries resorted to purchase the products of the vineyards of Médoc and Bordelais, of Foix, Albigeois, Gaillac, and Toulouse, of Anjou, Saintonge, and Poitou. The English and Flemish merchantmen, which came to be laden with salt and wine, brought meat and fish, butter and cheese, skins and leather, wool, rope, and metals.

On the Mediterranean coast medieval shipping had been

accustomed to find ports of call in Narbonne, Agde, and Cette, in the harbour which served Montpellier, in Aigues-Mortes and Arles, and in Fréjus and Antibes, but by the beginning of the sixteenth century sea-borne commerce was tending more and more to flow through Marseilles to the exclusion of all those places. Narbonne had been a flourishing trading centre under the Romans, who by a diversion of a branch of the River Aude had checked the natural tendency of the port to get silted up; and in later times the Crusades had brought an increase of business with the East. Since the fourteenth century the place had been decadent, however, for the breaking of a dyke had then allowed the Aude to resume its ancient course, and subsequent efforts to arrest the deterioration of the harbour had met with no success. As evidence of the former importance of Montpellier it is sufficient to remark that the commercial operations of Jacques Cœur had been centred upon that place. Montpellier stood upon the demesne of the Kings of France, to whom Marseilles did not then belong; it therefore received many favours, and became an active centre of trade and industry. If its geographical situation was favourable to it as a commercial link with Italy and the East, it suffered nevertheless under the disadvantage that it was at some distance from the sea, and must trade through a port with which connexion was to be gained only by a system of canals and paved roads. When the acquisition of Provence placed the Crown in possession of Marseilles, the tide of Royal favour was diverted to a place which enjoyed greater advantages, and at the same time the course of commercial currents was changed by the successful rivalry of Lyons and Beaucaire. Much the same causes accounted for the former prosperity and subsequent decline of Aigues-Mortes. As it ceased to flow through the moribund harbours of Languedoc, the Mediterranean trade of France became concentrated in the great seaport which stood waiting to receive it on the Provençal coast. In 1515 Marseilles was already the chief depot for the trade of France with the Mediterranean and the Levant, and was also in commercial relations with Portugal and Spain.

Of one place, prominent in the maritime communications of modern France, no mention has been made, and the reason

for the omission is that in 1515 the port of Le Havre-de-Grâce did not exist. On the north-eastern extremity of the Seine estuary, opposite Honfleur, there was then a marshy plain, a part of the Graville seigneurie, where banks of shingle made natural dykes, behind which were creeks and pools, and where by the action of currents and tides the duration of high water was made unusually long. Here Louis XI had thought of making a port, and here Louis XII, reviving the project, had built a few houses on the plain. There the matter would probably have rested, had not the Sire du Chillou, Captain of Honfleur, perceived an opportunity to secure the naval arsenal which he believed to be necessary to French defence, and had he not been fortunate enough to interest Florimond Robertet, whose influence in such matters was usually decisive. In 1517 Bonnivet as Admiral was commissioned to construct a port, and Du Chillou was deputed to supervise the works. Under the impulse of his enthusiasm the task of construction proceeded apace, and Francis I, when he visited the place three years later, found there a fortified town of respectable size, a port well protected against hostile attack, basins capable of accommodating the largest vessels, and solid jetties for the convenience of shipping. It was estimated that from first to last the enterprise cost the Crown 400,000 *livres tournois*, and it was commonly believed that at least one-quarter of that amount was frittered away by the mismanagement, or intercepted by the dishonesty, of the King's officers and of the contractors whom they employed. The thing is not improbable, for it was in keeping with the morals of the age, but, if the bill was inflated, the job was at any rate noteworthy. Where the waters of the Seine estuary had been wont to wash an empty shore, the generous expenditure of the King, the foresight of the Admiral, and the enthusiasm of the Captain of Honfleur had called out of a void of useless shingle a place which was destined to be famous in their own day as a naval arsenal, and to acquire in the years to come a renown yet greater as the second among all the seaports of France.

XXXIV

ECONOMIC CONDITIONS

AGRICULTURE. LAND TENURES. FISHERIES. SALT-WORKS.

MINING

It is generally accepted that successful cultivation of the land is the first condition of economic prosperity, and there can be no doubt that at the beginning of the sixteenth century, despite a notable progress then achieved by industry and commerce, it was upon the land that the economic system of France was founded. Agriculture at this time was in a state of transition after a period of severe trial. The Hundred Years' War had pressed with especial severity upon rural France, which foreign invasion and domestic strife had conspired to ruin: armed bands had ravaged the country districts; the population had fled; manor-houses had been destroyed; farms had been left desolate; fields had gone out of cultivation; and over wide districts agriculture had well-nigh come to an untimely end. When peace had been restored and France had begun once again to gather up the threads of her shattered life, a policy of economic reconstruction had been inaugurated by Charles VII and Louis XI, but not even then had the land received from the Crown the encouragement which its acute distress had seemed so urgently to demand. In the fiscal sphere official policy had, indeed, been positively prejudicial to agricultural interests, for in a period when indirect taxes were of comparatively small importance and direct taxation fell entirely upon the tillers of the soil, a policy of budgetary expansion had struck at the very vitals of agriculture. Louis XI in the course of his reign had increased the *taille* from under two million *livres tournois* a year to over four million, and the disastrous effects upon rural France were described by the States-General upon the morrow of his death. In the next reign the *taille* had been lowered, and in the first half of Louis XII's reign it had been reduced almost to the level at which Louis XI had first found it. The effect of fiscal relief had been immediate, for agriculture was ready to respond as soon as the burden of oppressive taxation should be lightened; and at the end of

Louis XII's reign Seyssel was able to declare that the reclamation of woodlands and wastes had proceeded at such a pace that a third of the kingdom had been brought into cultivation in a period of thirty years. The consequence of this expansion was to strengthen and confirm the hold of agriculture upon its position of economic pre-eminence, industry and commerce remaining subsidiary despite the favours which they had enjoyed; the position of industry was by comparison of relative unimportance, and the prosperity of commerce was due in no small measure to the trade in grain.¹

But if by the end of Louis XII's reign agriculture had regained its old vitality, it had not as yet shown any inclination to become progressive. Not only did the innate conservatism of the countryman lead him to tread in the ancient ways, but resistance to change was also produced by a factor which exerted a paralysing influence upon rural life. This factor was the problem of locomotion, which not merely denied to every district any but the most restricted market for its agricultural products, but also imposed the obligation of producing for itself all the necessities of life. Agriculture was accordingly based upon the need for being self-supporting in the production of corn and of all other bulky or heavy things, such as wine, the importation of which was precluded by the difficulty and cost of transport. The result was two-fold. In the first place, such things as vines had to be grown in regions ill fitted by nature for their cultivation; and, in the second place, the compelling claims of subsistence dictated an overwhelming preponderance of arable farming. Olives and fruits might be, and were, produced in the south, wines in the south and centre, wool, dyes, and textile materials in the industrial areas, and vegetables and dairy products in the immediate vicinity of big towns; but in every region, whatever its natural aptitudes, the chief crop had to be corn. Difficulties of transport, restricted outlets, and the imperious necessity of farming for subsistence gave small scope for experiment or innovation.

¹ A. Araskhiantz, 'Die französische Getreidehandelspolitik bis zum Jahre 1789 in ihrem Zusammenhange mit der Land-, Volks- und Finanzwirtschaft Frankreichs', in *Staats- und Sozialwissenschaftliche Forschungen*, ed. Gustav Schmoller, vol. iv, part iii, pp. 33-5.

Change, experiment, and the application of special skill were also discouraged by the compulsory character of husbandry, a custom of immemorial antiquity prescribing the method of cultivation with the force of an inviolable law. The arable land was divided into strips, and these strips were allotted in such a way as to produce a fair division among all cultivators in the matter of the fertility and accessibility of their parcels. In the south, where the ancient wheelless plough was in common use, the arable parcels were of normal size and shape, but elsewhere the strips were excessively long, because a wheeled plough leaves a piece of ground uncultivated where it turns, and the longer the strip, the less the turning, and consequently the smaller the waste. Besides being very long, the strips were very narrow, to ensure equal treatment, and the result of this was that the number of parcels reached a figure which modern opinion would deem altogether excessive. Sometimes, but not always, the whole block of arable land was inclosed by hedges and ditches, but in no event were the individual strips ever so defined, these being separated from each other by nothing more substantial than an unploughed furrow or 'balk'. The lack of boundaries probably originated in the fact that all the land was regarded as being held in common; and the practice of co-operative ploughing tended to keep it alive. In regions where the soil was poor and waste land for pasturing animals plentiful there was often considerable inclosure of the arable fields. In districts of greater fertility, as, for example, in Normandy, where agriculture was highly developed, there was a tendency to consolidate parcels and to inclose the private holding so formed. Upon the cultivators of all parcels, whether inclosed or not, custom enforced the observance of a recognized sequence of agricultural operations.

In modern farming the whole area of cultivable land is regularly put to some productive use, a result which is achieved in part by the application of appropriate fertilizers and in part by a scientific variation in the demands made upon the soil. No such continuous production was known to the medieval farmer, who could not fertilize, because he had no adequate materials, who could not vary his crops, because the low yield of his land compelled him to keep it as far as possible under corn, and who could avoid unproductiveness

only by adopting the expedient of recurrent periods of rest. His rotation was either biennial or triennial. The two-field system, as the former was called, was usual in the south, and the three-field in the north. Under the former system a half of the land was cropped, and a half left fallow. Under the latter a third of the land was put under winter corn, wheat, spelt, or rye; another third was sown with spring corn, barley, or oats; and the remainder was left fallow, to be ploughed, weeded, and marled or limed. The time was at hand when biennial and triennial rotation would be affected by the introduction of such plants as clover, sainfoin, lucerne, and roots, which could be grown in succession to corn, not only without detriment to the land, because the demands they made upon it were different, but even with advantage, because their production entailed an amount of cultivation which the land would not otherwise have received. In the early years of the sixteenth century fodder plants and roots were sometimes grown, but not to such an extent as to affect the dominance of the compulsory fallow, the need for which continued to be imposed by the necessity to grow cereals and the impossibility of adequate enrichment of the soil. That the value of manures was well understood is shown by the fact that agricultural leases usually contained a clause imposing obligations upon the tenant in this respect, but the difficulties in the way of sound practice were very great. There were no artificial manures; dung was scarce, beasts being few in number and left for the most part to wander at will over the woods and wastes; and the source of supply to be found in towns was closed to the farmer by the difficulty and cost of transport. In these conditions the land fared but ill: some farmers did not feed it at all, depending solely upon the recuperative influence of recurrent rest; others fed it with such materials as they could conveniently come by, those of the littoral applying seaweed and sea-sand, and those inland using marl, lime, wood-ash, leaf-mould, and mud scraped out of fishponds. Inability to give adequate enrichment to the soil was the bane of husbandry, encouraging dependence upon vigorous but coarse growers, such as rye, and leading to a general poverty of yield which held suspended over the countryside the ever-present threat of dearth.

Agricultural equipment did nothing to help the husband-

man in his struggle to maintain productiveness, for his buildings were small and inconvenient, and his appliances were the primitive instruments bequeathed to him by a remote ancestry. There were ploughs and harrows, spades, shovels, forks, and hay-forks, rakes, mattocks, and hoes, scythes, sickles, and bill-hooks, hatchets and saws, flails and winnowing-fans, sieves and churns; but many were of a construction which made them incompetent to execute satisfactorily the operations which such instruments are intended to perform. Efficient ploughs, drawn by horses or oxen, were not unknown; mention is made in our period of a new iron plough, fitted with two wheels, a share and coulter in iron, a drawbar, and other appropriate attachments; but such instruments were rare, for iron was costly, and none but the wealthy farmer could furnish a team of horses or oxen. The plough ordinarily used was a primitive wooden implement, consisting of a pointed share with wings to throw aside the soil; it was drawn by oxen or by a gang of men; and it did little more than scratch the surface of the soil which it was intended to work. Even this aid to cultivation, such as it was, was denied to many small-holders, who owned neither plough nor cattle, and were obliged to go forth, spade in hand, to till their land in the sweat of their own brows. The spade was of wood, bound with iron; being unduly heavy, it was made narrow; and the unfortunate conjunction of excessive weight and inadequate size involved the expenditure of much effort for little result.¹ Grain was sown by hand, a measured quantity being scattered over a given piece of land;² weeding was done, usually by women, with a sort of Dutch hoe; and the crop was cut with the sickle and thrashed with the flail. Crops were usually got in on the backs of animals, such carts as were in use being clumsy wooden things of local manufacture, totally unsuitable for the carriage of heavy loads over the execrable roads. To this account of agricultural equipment it should, perhaps, be added that the mill, which was in common use in the fulling, tanning, and brewing trades, was

¹ Bezar, *La Vie rurale dans le sud de la région parisienne de 1450 à 1560*, p. 151.

² About two bushels of wheat were sown to the acre, and gave a yield of six or eight bushels as a rule, though some land would seem to have produced not much more than three bushels.

by no means uncommon in rural France. Sometimes it was still turned by hand, and sometimes it was driven by animals; but as a rule the motive power was derived from running water, with which the country was well supplied.

The farmer's choice of crops was restricted both by the number of plants in cultivation and by the need to concentrate upon the production of grain. Potatoes were not known; there was no beet; the oleaginous plants did not include the plant from which colza oil is obtained; and clover, lucerne, and sainfoin were not grown. Corn, wherewith to make his staple food, and a few vegetables; hemp, flax, and dye plants for the making of his clothing; and vines for the production of his liquor—these were the farmer's chief care, and amongst them the cereals occupied by far the most important place. They consisted of wheat, rye, spelt, barley, oats, millet, and buckwheat, the last-named plant having been grown in Normandy from the middle of the fifteenth century, and from that region of prosperous farming having spread slowly to less favoured localities, whose necessities its sturdy productiveness had done much to relieve. Wheat was not grown upon any considerable scale, for pure wheaten bread was a luxury to be found only on the tables of the very rich. The bread ordinarily served in well-to-do households was made of a mixture of wheat and rye called *meslin*, whilst in the houses of the peasant and the artisan the staple food was made of a mixture of rye and oats, which in many localities were the only cereals sown. In the cultivation of vegetable plants the same lack of variety prevailed; something in the nature of market-gardening was, indeed, to be found in the vicinity of a few big cities; but normally the vegetables entering into the farmer's rotation were restricted to beans, peas, lentils, and vetches, the last named being used as a forage, whilst their seeds were fed to poultry and pigs. Saffron, which was used both as a condiment and as a dye, was the object of a specialized cultivation, for it had to be fenced in, and could be grown only in ground which was worked by hand; it was a valuable crop, and with its aid the districts which could produce it, notably Auvergne and the Albigeois district of Languedoc, made an important contribution to the country's export trade. The cereals, which were grown in all districts, flourished more particularly in Langue-

doc and Provence, in Guyenne, in Poitou and Touraine, in the Île-de-France, Normandy, and Picardy, and above all in Beauce, which was called the granary of France.

Textile and dye plants came next in importance after foodstuffs. Amongst the textile plants hemp was a particularly important crop, linen being produced locally throughout the country, and its production occupying thousands of weavers, with the result that ground which could satisfy the weavers' requirements commanded a much larger price than ordinary arable land. This ground was to be found for the most part in river valleys, for hemp grows best in a moist soil, and the presence of water is necessary for the process of retting. Flax was also grown, but not upon nearly so extensive a scale. Both crops were grown in many parts, but flourished particularly in Normandy and Brittany, Maine and Anjou, Gascony, Auvergne, Dauphiné, and Languedoc, whilst parts of Picardy and of Poitou were also favourable to their production. In many of these districts hemp was the chief crop. The teasle was also grown commercially for use in cloth-making. The plants yielding dyes were dyer's weed, from which yellow was obtained, madder, which furnished the reds, and woad or pastel for the blues. All of them were essential to a textile industry which was unacquainted with indigo and chemical dyes, and it was to the local production of madder and pastel that the prosperity of the French cloth-making towns was in the main attributable. Nor did the influence of the woad plant stop there, for this plant required intensive culture, and that culture furnished an object-lesson by which agricultural processes were gradually transformed. 'The woad industry exerted a profound influence on agricultural economics in the Middle Ages. Just as sugar-beet farms in modern times have become models of intensive cultivation for all branches of agriculture and have thus raised the whole standard of husbandry, so did the cultivation of woad six hundred years ago.' Rooted in tradition, ignorant, and unenterprising, the arable farmer had for generations rested content with his miserably inadequate yield, and there can be little doubt that he would have persisted indefinitely in his humdrum routine, had not the woad-grower come to show him a more excellent way. To grow woad successfully, it is necessary to plough the land

thoroughly and often, to manure and harrow it, to hoe and weed it repeatedly, and generally to lavish upon it an amount of manual labour which no grower of cereals had ever thought desirable for the production of his crops. When at length he began to take hints from his more active neighbour, he was astonished to find how greatly the heaviness of his yield could be increased.

The chief areas of woad-production were the valley of the Somme, Lower Normandy, and Languedoc; they turned out nearly all the woad which was used in France, and, in addition, a considerable surplus for export, for which England, Germany, and the Low Countries competed by reason of its high quality. Amiens, Corbie, Montdidier, and Nesle used woad grown in the valleys of the Somme, Aisne, and Oise; the Norman manufacturing towns drew their supplies from the neighbourhood of Caen; and the industrial centres of the south, such as Carcassonne and Narbonne, were supplied from the districts round Toulouse. In addition to its use in the textile industry woad furnished the artist's palette with the colour that gave him his lovely pastel blue; and it was also used medicinally, being believed, though erroneously, to possess virtues as an antiseptic, febrifuge, and haemostatic. The time had now come when the supremacy of woad was to be challenged, for Europe had recently begun to receive shipments of indigo from the East, and France would presently abandon the use of the home-grown dye, which had served her cloth trade so well. The disappearance of the woad-fields inflicted a serious loss upon French agriculture, for it was not for nothing that popular speech had turned to them for a phrase that should signify a land of exceptional abundance.¹

After textile and dye plants, and not far behind them in importance, came the vine, which was grown in all districts, even in those in which soil and climate were eminently unsuitable. This was caused in part by the defects of the transport system, which added prohibitively to the cost of wine

¹ J. B. Hurry, *The Woad Plant and Its Dye*, pp. 33, 72, 94-103, 214-16, 251-6. He explains, p. 95, that the balls into which the pulped leaves of woad were rolled were called *cocagnes*, and so 'a *pays de cocagne* came to mean a land of unusual wealth and fertility'. It should, perhaps, be added that Littré does not regard this derivation with much favour.

brought from a distance, and in part by the fact that the vine could be grown by the small-holder with less outlay and exertion than cereals and with the hope of a better yield. The vine likes a hot September for the ripening of its fruit, but differs from typical products of the south, such as the olive, in that it is less exigent in the matter of heat and more patient in the matter of cold. There are limits to its endurance, however, and the monks of Saint-Germain-des-Prés were not the only viticulturalists of northern France who had cause to lament that their hopes were constantly dashed, because frosts would kill the buds, hail would ruin the flowers, and rain would rot the grapes. Then, as now, the vine did best in the centre and south; and Gascony and Languedoc, Provence and Dauphiné, Burgundy, Dordogne and Aunis, Anjou and Orléanais were the chief wine-growing districts. Champagne grew grapes, but had not as yet discovered the secret of the famous vintages which later ages have gratefully learned to associate with its name. Had these wines been made, they would not have enjoyed their later vogue, for the taste of those days preferred the strong and heavy products of central and southern vineyards; and it was the wines of Gascony, headed by the product of the Gaillac vineyards with its special *laissez-passer* from the Crown, which were most often found on Royal and princely tables alike in England and in France. The quality of these wines was maintained by a rigorous enforcement of penalties for adulteration or substitution. The products of the Médoc region also enjoyed a repute which caused them to be in demand for export to other countries, and the extensive vineyards of Poitou produced wines which were commended by epicures, consumed by kings, and generally reckoned to be on an equality with the products of Aunis and Beaune. Here too, as in many vine-growing districts, the distillation of brandy was a rural industry. Many vines were grown in the neighbourhood of Paris, and, although the climate was not really suitable, a fair result was obtained; Charles VIII was able to commend the local vintage when dining at Villeneuve-le-Roi, whilst a traveller of the time, who brought to the Île-de-France the discriminating palate of an ecclesiastical dignitary, has told us that the vines of the district gave good red and white wines, a red wine called claret, which was made

in considerable quantities, being particularly agreeable to drink by reason of its lightness and refreshing qualities.¹ In Normandy the vine was to some extent grown commercially in the valleys of the Seine, Orne, Eure, and other rivers, but the climate was unfavourable, and for the most part in that province the vine performed functions which were mainly ornamental, taking the place of the espalier-trained fruit-tree, which had not as yet been invented to clothe walls. Laboriously produced in the northern districts, wine was a thin and sour stuff, which the introduction of cider and perry had already gone far to displace as a popular beverage. Beer was drunk in districts which produced neither vines nor fruit-trees, as, for example, in Picardy; and a liquor called *cervoise*, which was akin to beer, was made in many parts of the country.

Common adjuncts alike to the castle and manor-house and to the farm and cottage, the garden and the orchard played a recognized part in rural economy, but they did not often possess a commercial character, though some market-gardening was done in the vicinity of the big cities, more especially in the south, which had adopted the expedient of irrigation to mitigate the effects of drought. The vegetables and herbs chiefly grown were cabbage, spinach, celery, and lettuce, borage and hyssop, mustard and parsley, beet, turnip, and pumpkin, gherkins and cucumbers, onions, chives, shallots, leeks, and garlic. The Abbey of Saint-Germain had watercress-beds at Rueil, and in Francis I's time asparagus and artichokes from Blois were served on the table at which the King dined. A few flowers were usually to be seen, especially lavender, wallflowers, and roses, which it was the practice to make up in garlands for presentation to friends; but the basis of horticulture was strictly utilitarian, and few gardeners were prepared to spend labour or money for any purely decorative end. Fruit-trees played an important part in the food-supply of the country, and such fruit as was produced commercially commanded a good price. Apples, pears, and medlars, plums and cherries, peaches and apricots, raspberries, gooseberries, and mulberries were commonly grown, and the orange and the lemon had been known in the

¹ Antonio de Beatis, *Voyage du Cardinal d'Aragon en Allemagne, Hollande, Belgique, France et Italie* (1517-1518), p. 263.

south since the time of the Crusades. Plums were extensively grown in Touraine, in Agenais, and in the south for the production of prunes, in which there was an important domestic and foreign trade. Figs and olives occupied much land in Dauphiné, Provence, and parts of Languedoc, where a soft climate without much rain suited them much better than it would have suited cereal crops. In districts where the olive did not grow, supplies of oil were obtained in the main by extraction from various nuts; and the chestnut, the walnut, the filbert, and the almond were grown extensively. The walnut also furnished a wood which was much used in furniture-making. Some twenty varieties of the apple and some fifteen varieties of the pear were known in the orchards of Normandy, the pearmain and the pippin being found among the apples, and the bergamot and the Bon Chrétien among the pears, whilst cherries and plums flourished in the valley of the Seine. As has been pointed out, however, it has to be remembered that Normandy was much in advance of the rest of France in the intelligent cultivation of the fruit-tree.

In the latter part of the sixteenth century the secretary of a Venetian ambassador described the horticultural products of France in words which may be taken to be equally applicable to the preceding age.¹ In the matter of vegetables and fruits, he said, the country was as well off as any part of Europe, though as a result of the cool climate the flavours were not very good. Figs and melons were scarce and bad except in the southern and sea-coast districts. On the other hand, apples, pears, and apricots were plentiful, and Bon Chrétien and bergamot pears and a certain kind of apple could be kept all through the winter. Cherries were abundant but of poor quality. Gherkins and cucumbers were large and first-rate. Salads and herbs were in season practically all the year, since by reason of the temperate climate, lacking extremes of heat and cold, successional crops of lettuce could be had with little trouble. Similarly, the roses and wallflowers might be considered to be fully equal to the best products of Italy.

The pastoral industry occupied a secondary place, and agriculture suffered in consequence, for, as an Agricultural

¹ Tommaseo, *Relations des ambassadeurs vénitiens*, vol. ii, p. 576.

Commission of the Revolutionary era was afterwards to point out, you cannot have crops without dung, or dung without stock. The importance of stock-raising being ignored, no land was ever laid down to grass, and the natural pastures received no care, those which were swampy being left undrained and those which were arid getting no irrigation. Such meadows as existed were for the most part in the demesnes of manorial lords, who usually kept them in hand, selling the hay as a standing crop; but hay showed a good profit, and sometimes the lord would himself have it scythed, made, and carted. After the hay had been got in, the fields were open to common use, and the village cattle were pastured on them. At other times the bulk of the live stock found its living on the common waste, which was thus of the greatest importance to the agricultural community. This waste land was never put down to hay, but was open to pasture throughout the year, the rights over it being based upon the holdings of arable strips. The villagers' animals were also permitted to feed in the lord's woodlands, where acorns and beech-mast formed useful additions to their provender.

The custom, which prescribed that arable and grass lands should be open to general grazing after the crops had been got in, prevailed very generally, though not universally, throughout the country. *Vaine pâture*, as this grazing-right was called, was an integral part of the two-field and three-field systems. It was an outcome of the theory that the land was common, and the cultivator's enjoyment of it subject to its common character. Not only might live stock be pastured, but all and sundry might go gleaning for thatching, for firing, and for litter, and the owner was required to leave his straw of such a length as to give to the gleaners a reasonable return for their labour. There was no *vaine pâture* in the regions of inclosed fields, namely Brittany, the Cotentin, Maine and Perche, parts of Poitou, La Vendée, the Massif Central, and the Basque country. These were for the most part broken and unfertile districts, in which people were few and waste land for the sustenance of animals was plentiful. Here each man fed his own stock, tethering to prevent straying, if other restraint were lacking. From the end of the Middle Ages a movement had set in to free land from common grazing-rights. The movement was especially vigorous

in the south, where the prevalence of land that could not be tilled gave ample scope to the animals, and where Roman law looked askance upon any interference with an owner's right to the full enjoyment of his property.¹

Left to fend for themselves in the matter of their keep, live stock received little care of any sort. Ill fed and ill housed, bred promiscuously, and ignorantly doctored, animals were of poor quality, and there was much disease, the murrain ravaging the herds with the same deadly persistence with which the plague scourged mankind. Amongst the various branches of the industry cattle-raising was in an especially backward state. This branch was practised chiefly in Berry, in Auvergne, in Normandy and Brittany, in the Île-de-France and Picardy, in Sologne, and in Valentinois, a traveller saying of the last-named region that Dauphiné had a fine breed of cattle, as black as fine velvet. In some places cattle were fattened for butchery, but the practice was not common, beef being in much less demand than mutton and pork. If the flesh of cattle was more or less neglected, so was their milk, the milk itself not being much drunk, butter being less used than now, and cheese, which was an important article of diet, being made as a rule from the milk of sheep or of goats. In flocks France was much richer than in herds; her sheep, which she reared with much greater success, far outnumbered her cattle; and the wool which was clipped from them combined with the tinctorial plants to make the fortune of the cloth-making towns. French wool was also much sought after abroad. The best came from Berry, Normandy, Picardy, Artois, the Île-de-France, Champagne, Anjou, Poitou, Sologne, Valentinois, and Languedoc; and a fine wool from the rich pastures of Soissons and Santerre was employed in the making of certain special stuffs. A tendency, recently become discernible in the textile centres, for the processes of manufacture to spread from the towns into the surrounding rural districts was of direct advantage to the peasantry, not only by its provision of lucrative employment, but also by its stimulation of the demand for wool. The horse was raised in Normandy and Brittany, in Perche and Maine, in Poitou and Berry, in Gascony, and in Auvergne;

¹ Bloch, *Les Caractères originaux de l'histoire rurale française*, pp. 40-8, 58-62, 203-6.

but it was not bred in sufficient numbers to satisfy the internal demand, and horses were imported from abroad. The scarcity of horses led to the employment of other animals for purposes for which they were not very suitable: the ox and the cow were harnessed to the plough and the cart; and the donkey, besides drawing the plough and turning the mill, was in frequent use as a beast of burden. Pigs were extremely numerous, their flesh, which was much eaten by all classes, providing the only meat which was ever tasted by the bulk of the population. Turned out to forage for themselves in the woodlands and on the wastes, these animals cost so little in trouble or expense that the humblest peasant might venture to own a few; and he did so the more readily that it was not he who suffered by the wandering habits which made the invasive and ubiquitous swine a constant plague to the farmer and a frequent nuisance even in the streets of towns. The keeping of poultry—hens, capons, and geese—was also generally practised, eggs forming an important article in the diet of the peasant. Ducks and pigeons were less common, and swans, pheasants, and peafowl rarer still. Bees were very generally kept, the economic importance of apiculture being far greater then than in modern times, for honey was the standard sweetening agent in a world in which sugar was known only as a costly drug, whilst the wax of the combs was in general use for the making of candles. When the industry of its inmates could thus be turned to such good account, it was natural that the beehive should take its place in many a cottage garden by the side of the pigsty and the hen-house.

I have written of woods and forests on an earlier page, and need not here revert at length to the same theme, but must not close my account of the products of the soil without pausing to notice that the economic importance of woodlands was immensely greater in that period than in the later ages which have become habituated to the use of coal, oil, and metals. Besides being more important, the woodlands were much more extensive, and it has been calculated that they covered not less than a third part of the surface of the land in populous and developed areas and a much larger proportion in more backward regions. Their products were numerous and of essential service. Timber was used in the

building of houses and ships, in the construction of ploughs, carts, and agricultural tools, for fencing, for cabinet-making, and for heating; stakes for vines and staves for barrels both came from the woods; the bark of the lime was used in rope-making; a tanning-material was extracted from the bark of the oak; dead leaves and dried bracken supplied litter; oil was expressed from beech-mast; charcoal, which was consumed in huge quantities, performed many of the economic functions now discharged by coal and coke; pigs, cattle, and horses fed on acorns, young growths, and grass; and human beings consumed chestnuts, wild fruits, and berries, as well as the flesh of animals slain in the chase, whose skins also served to augment the supply of leather. The medieval forest contained most of the species found in the woods in our own days: the yew and the maple supplied material for bows, the ash for arrows; box was used by the turners; walnut was a favourite wood with the cabinet-makers; with timber hewn from the beech, the weaver built his loom; the chestnut, the oak, the elm, the birch, the hornbeam, the plane, the pine, the alder, the willow, the aspen, the hawthorn and the blackthorn, the holly, the hazel, and the juniper, the privet, the heath, the broom, the furze, and the eglantine were all found, and were all utilized in one way or another. Indeed, it would have been well for the forests if this use had been less, or at all events less reckless, for ruthless felling and excessive barking combined with the depredations of browsing cattle to despoil and disfigure the woods, and, by a process of relentless attrition, to dissipate the heritage of sylvan wealth and beauty with which nature had bounteously endowed a favoured land.

Upon the subject of land tenures in medieval France much might be written, but for the purposes of an economic inquiry it will suffice to consider briefly the ways in which agricultural land was held. By far the greater part¹ was held by various tenures created by the feudal law. Every

¹ Small quantities of land, more especially in the south, where the hold of feudalism was less strong, were held by allodial tenure. The *allou* was an estate possessed in full ownership, without acknowledgement of a superior, and free of all liabilities, obligations, and restrictions; since it did not originate in a feudal grant, there was no seigneurial claim to fealty and homage or to rent and services or to dues on succession and alienation.

seigneurial estate in France consisted of two distinct parts, the *domaine proche* and the *mouvances*. The former was the portion which the owner kept in hand; it consisted of the castle or manor-house and its surroundings, a few fields, the lakes, the woods, and the wastes. The latter was the portion which was held by the peasants under various forms of tenure, and was cultivated by them for their own benefit. This portion, though it continued in law to form part of the lord's estate, had become for all practical purposes the property of those who occupied it. It invariably comprised by far the greater acreage of cultivable land. The reason for this was that, whereas in medieval France land was plentiful, labour was excessively scarce, so that the owner of an estate could himself farm no more than a small part of it, and could procure able-bodied men to undertake the cultivation of the rest only by offering the inducement of a tenure which conferred upon the cultivators a right tantamount to ownership. In this way a very numerous class of small owners had come into existence under the feudal régime, and the bulk of the cultivable soil was occupied by commoners, whose enjoyment, save for a liability to seigneurial rents and dues, was full and complete.

The form of commoner tenure most prevalent in the Middle Ages was the *accensement*, or transfer in consideration of a *cens* or perpetual rent, this rent being in the nature of a fee-farm rent or feu duty. Since it was also an acknowledgement of lordship, the *cens* was something more than a mere rent; and this form of tenure was peculiar to commoners, whether *bourgeois*, villeins, or serfs. In addition to his liability for rent, which might be payable either in money or in kind, the purchaser was often burdened with a liability for *corvées* or personal services; sometimes he had to pay a due on succession; usually he had to pay a fine on alienation; and payment of his *cens* could be enforced against him by attachment, not only of his holding, but of all his property, real and personal. With these reservations his interest in his land was complete and full: he could not be arbitrarily evicted, for his contract was perpetual; he could either himself use and enjoy the land or he could sub-let it to another; he could leave it to whom he pleased and sell it when he would. Akin to the *cens* in origin was the *champart*, a form of tenure

under which the rent was payable wholly in kind out of the crop harvested, an arrangement convenient to the tenant when money was scarce, and not inconvenient to a resident landlord, who received produce without the trouble of growing it. The proportion taken by the *champartier* varied by local custom from a twelfth to a third; it was levied on crops of all kinds, whether wheat and oats, or peas and beans, or flax and hemp; and it had to be paid before the crop could be moved, a condition capable of inflicting much injury when the *champartier* was either spiteful or slack. Were land to be left uncultivated, no rent could be levied, for the liability attached, not to the land or its holder, but only to its produce; but the interests of the seigneur were safeguarded to some extent by his right to evict for gross negligence in cultivation.

The peasant holdings of the Middle Ages were for the most part of small acreage, being designed to meet the needs, not of the capitalist farmer, but of the impecunious rustic, and by the sixteenth century the successional rights of the customary law, which prescribed equal partition for *terre roturière*, had had the effect of producing a further distribution of the acreages comprised in the original grants. A marked tendency to make grants smaller, as available land became absorbed, had also manifested itself. For one reason or another, therefore, under the tenures liable to *cens* or *champart* the average holding was of small extent: holdings of two acres or thereabouts were common; holdings of ten acres or more were rare; and holdings of less than an acre were by no means unknown.

The *cens* was invariably low, and as often as not was ludicrously inadequate, standing to the rack-rent in the same relation as shillings, or even pence, to pounds. The reason was twofold: in the first place, the *cens* had been designedly fixed at a low figure in a period when competition to secure able-bodied men had been keen; in the second place, its inadequacy was apt to be increased by a change in the value of money, for, being the subject of a perpetual contract, it could not be altered to meet changing circumstances. The peasant who held land at a *cens* was therefore a lucky fellow, for he had acquired a title without providing cash and paid a rent that bore little relation to the economic

value of his holding; but he did not appreciate his good fortune, for he had forgotten the origin of his tenure, and regarded rents, dues, and services owed to a feudal lord as irksome and oppressive derogations from the fullness of ownership and enjoyment. The sixteenth-century landlord was equally dissatisfied, and with more reason, for he found that the bargains made by his predecessors in title had deprived him of his best land and for ever debarred him from resuming possession of it or exacting a reasonable return. The *accensement* was not, therefore, a bargain to which he would willingly put his hand in dealing with such agricultural land as might remain in his disposition or as might be brought into the market by the reclamation of his wastes. For all land with which he might be able to deal he wanted a new sort of contract on the basis of economic value.

The circumstances of Francis I's time were favourable to the realization of this ambition, and in this period leases for short and long terms at economic rents became usual features of agricultural development. One characteristic of the reign was an increase in the supply of currency; another was the growth of population, with a consequent increase in the demand for land; and a third was the growing prosperity of the rural districts as a consequence of economic progress and expanding markets. In all these respects the time was favourable to the introduction of the new agricultural tendencies. The terms of the leases were usually short; tenancies for three, five, or six years were common; but in Normandy, the chief centre of agricultural progress, the usual term was nine years; nor were terms of much longer duration by any means unknown in that and in other districts. Whereas *censives* were nearly always in small parcels, the acreages comprised in the new agricultural leases were usually considerable, running, perhaps, to an average of a hundred acres. In the fifteenth century the tenants were invariably working farmers or peasants, but in the sixteenth century these classes had to face the competition of the *bourgeois*, who took up leases as a speculation with a view to sub-letting the land. It is sometimes maintained that law and custom were unfavourable to the agricultural tenant: if he held for a short term, the lack of security against eviction left him with little incentive to improve his land; strict provisions

about the rotation of crops and the fallow deprived him of all initiative; he was burdened with clearly defined liabilities for the upkeep of buildings, hedges, ditches, and ponds and the restitution of such live stock and plant as were comprised in the tenancy; and of such profit as he might contrive to earn, an undue proportion was wrested from him by the rapacious collectors of the *taille*. The wide prevalence of agricultural tenancies may be thought to offer fairly conclusive proof that this picture is painted in unduly sombre tones.

Another form of contract destined to become popular in the sixteenth century was the *métayage*, an application to the agricultural short or long term tenancy of the principle, which had been embodied in the *champart*, of a contract based, not upon a money rent, but upon a division of the produce. Under this system the landlord supplied stock and seed as well as land, and received by way of rent a fixed part, usually one-half, of the yield. The *champart* had been acceptable to owners in a primitive state of society, when, being resident with large households upon their estates, and having few opportunities to supply their needs in markets, they had been glad to receive live stock and crops without the trouble of production or the expense of purchase; but the contract had fallen out of favour when owners, ceasing to reside, had ceased also to have a use for their share of the produce, and at the same time had found that its selling value was steadily falling, whereas the purchasing power of cash tended as steadily to rise. Had those conditions continued to prevail, *métayages* could never have come into favour with the land-owning class; but the conditions were totally reversed by the monetary revolution, of which the effects began to be felt soon after Francis I's accession, and the rapid spread of the *métayage* system resulted from the fact that, whilst no landlord wanted a tumbling *livre*, every lessor jumped at the prospect of a share of soaring crops.¹ The system prevailed especially in the centre and the south; in Poitou, for example, the agricultural tenancies consisted of *métayages* and cash-rent contracts in about equal proportions. Though the usual division of the produce was into halves, other apportionments were sometimes made, and instances might be found in

¹ M. Bloch, *Les Caractères originaux de l'histoire rurale française*, p. 151.

which the lessor received no more than a third or even a sixth.

Land in the hands of commoners bore certain burdens imposed by the feudal law. At one of them, the *corvée* or liability for personal service, we have already had occasion to glance, and here we need pause only to note that at the close of the Middle Ages the *corvée* was ceasing to be rigorously enforced, being either relinquished altogether or commuted into a small cash payment, which formed a trifling addition to the *cens*. It was, however, well known to be the outcome, not of the lord's ownership of property, but of his former authority over persons, and if it was detested, as it most certainly was, it was not so much by reason of any burden which it imposed upon the peasantry as because it had about it the taint of its servile origin. The compulsion under which the peasant lay to have his corn ground in the lord's mill, his bread baked in the lord's oven, his grapes crushed in the lord's press, and his cows served by the lord's bull was not liked much better by a generation which had forgotten the origin of *banalités*. In early days the construction of a mill, oven, or winepress and the purchase of a pedigree bull had been costly undertakings far beyond the reach of rustic finance, and the lord who provided them had performed a public service to the community which he thus endowed. In some cases *banalités* had come to an end, because the mills, ovens, or presses, destroyed during the wars, had not been rebuilt; in others the lord had been bought out by the villagers.¹ Where the liability subsisted, the tariff was usually moderate, amounting to five or seven per cent. of the value of the commodity handled. Less odium attached to the *dîme*, or tithe, which was an instance of a voluntary offering being converted by custom into a compulsory payment. Tithes were called *grosses* when levied on cereals and the other main crops, *menues* when levied on flocks, herds, vegetables, and garden produce, and *novales* when

¹ Sometimes the lord let his mill to a miller or to a speculator, who sub-let it. The rent was paid either in money or in grain, and sometimes the tenant was under a liability to grind for the lord's household without remuneration. Flour-mills were the most numerous, but mills were also used for the production of oil and paper, for the preparation of tanning-materials, and for the fulling of cloth: Bezard, *La Vie rurale dans le sud de la région parisienne*, pp. 172-5.

levied on the produce of land recently brought into cultivation. The levy did not always consist of a tenth part, the amount being regulated by local custom. The proceeds had been applicable originally to church expenses, the upkeep of ecclesiastical buildings, hospitals, and schools, the relief of the poor, and the remuneration of the parochial clergy, and payment for such purposes was not grudged; but the burden was resented when tithe fell into the hands of great ecclesiastical communities or of lay impropiators, who diverted it to their own purposes, and doled out to the parish priest a miserable pittance, on which he could scarcely live.

Of all the privileges of the feudal nobility none was more odious to their inferiors than their sporting rights, and it would seem pretty clear that none was in fact so injurious to the tillers of the soil. The rights were not ancient, for in former ages, when men had been few, and game had abounded in the huge woods that covered the country, the killing of animals had been so far from being restricted that the destruction of noxious beasts and vermin had been regarded as a public duty. A change most baleful to every cultivator of the soil had crept in as a consequence of the progress of agriculture and the advance of civilization: as fields had multiplied and woods and wastes had been reclaimed, game had gradually become more scarce, and as game had diminished, the lust to destroy it had undergone a marked increase among a leisured class deprived of most other outlets for its energies. From the beginning of the sixteenth century game had become scarce enough to cause some dismay among its insatiable pursuers, and measures were already being taken to multiply objects of the chase. Immense harm was done to the fields, and immense quantities of grain were eaten or destroyed, by wolves, boars, foxes, rabbits, hares, and pigeons; and scarcely less injurious than the depredations of the game were the activities of its pursuers, who were in constant motion in the countryside, trampling down the crops. It is certain that a heavy burden was placed upon agriculture by the preserving and the pursuit of game.

Fishing rights, like hunting rights, were jealously guarded by landlords, but with this difference that, whereas in the

one case the basis of seigneurial interest was the prospect of sport, in the other it was the expectation of pecuniary profit. For fishing was an important and lucrative industry in an age in which a strict observance of numerous days of abstinence was enforced by the rules of the Church. Sea fish were caught on all the coasts, and were conveyed inland either salted or fresh, the range for the delivery of fresh fish being, however, much restricted by the lack of facilities for rapid transport, so that in all regions at a remove from the sea the inhabitants, if they would eat fish fresh, must have recourse to the products of their own inland waters. In these conditions inland fisheries possessed considerable importance, and in addition to the many rivers and streams there was an abundance of lakes and ponds, many of them being artificially constructed even in places in which corn might have been grown. As regards the sea, the chief sources of supply in the north were Normandy for herring and mackerel, Brittany for haddock, and the whole northern littoral for the sardine. Cod, soles, dabs, whiting, plaice, skate, turbot, mullet, sturgeon, hake, bass, shad, the dolphin, the seal, the dog-fish, and the conger eel, were found along with mussels and oysters in the markets; but none of them could approach the herring in commercial importance. From the rivers came barbel, tench, salmon, trout, gudgeon, lampreys, and eels, whilst carp and pike from ponds and lakes were eaten, though they were not much esteemed.

Fishing rights in rivers belonged to riparian owners, and were usually let. Occasionally it would happen that a landlord would let a stretch of water and then would thoughtlessly or maliciously spoil it by tipping in clay, weeds, and rubbish from the bank. The fishermen of Saint-Cloud, tenants of the Abbey of Saint-Germain-des-Prés, were aggrieved in this fashion in the days of Charles VIII. Ignored when they sought a remedy peaceably, they determined to redress their wrongs by violence, and, filling their boats with weapons and missiles, they repaired in a body to the Pont de Passy, where they menaced a Royal official, who ventured to expostulate with them, and told the representative of the Abbey that, if only they could lay hands on the monks, they would tip the whole crew of them into the river, to lie and rot beside their own rubbish. We are told that the holy men trembled,

not in fear of the violence of the rioters, but in horror at the thought of their impiety.¹

An indispensable article of diet in all ages, salt played a part of immense consequence in a period which knew nothing of the steamboat, the railway train, the motor lorry, and the refrigerator; and it may be classed with corn, meat, wine, wool, and dyes as a natural product of major importance. We have seen how far the fishing industry was dependent upon it for the distribution of its products in edible condition. No less was its utility in relation to meat, the greater part of the population eating none but salted meat during the greater part of the year, because beasts which could not be fed during the winter had to be slaughtered at the end of the summer months. Salt was also an essential article in the treatment of leather. So great was the importance of the commodity that the lack of it in Switzerland and its abundance in Languedoc were reckoned to possess international significance as factors enabling the producing country to control the policy of the consumers. Economists have estimated that in a single salt-producing region, namely Poitou, not less than 40,000 persons derived a living from the manufacture and marketing of salt.

Salt was collected in Saintonge, Aunis, Poitou, Ponthieu, Brittany, Burgundy, Provence, Languedoc, and Guyenne. Saintonge, Poitou, and Languedoc produced the most salt, and the best. At the end of the fifteenth century Poitou supplied La Marche, the Limousin, Auvergne, Périgord, Quercy, Agenais, and Bordeaux; Languedoc supplied, not only its own needs, but those of most of the south, including Forez, Lyonnais, and Mâconnais, and also competed with Poitou for the markets of Rouergue, Auvergne, and Quercy; and the products of the Breton marshes were consumed in the valleys of the Seine and the Somme, in Normandy and most of Picardy, in the Île-de-France, and in Champagne. Enormous quantities of salt were produced by the salt-marshes of Brittany, especially by those of Croisic and Locmaria near Guérande; but, great as was the production of these, it was exceeded by the output of the Bay of Bourgneuf, near Nantes, which turned out annually 37,000 hogsheads,

¹ Bezard, *La Vie rurale dans le sud de la région parisienne*, pp. 141-3.

and was scarcely inferior in productivity to the whole of Aunis and Saintonge. In Languedoc the chief works were at Le Peccais, near Aigues-Mortes. Provence produced chiefly through its marshes at La Vernède and Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer. Of trifling importance by comparison with those of the chief producing regions, the salt-works in Ponthieu were yet a source of wealth to the local capital, Abbeville.

The method of extraction adopted in one of the chief producing regions is thus described by a student of its economic conditions. In Poitou, says M. Boissonnade,¹ the practice was to construct square basins, and to subdivide them by dykes. Into these the sea-water was introduced from the middle of May till the end of August; a crystallized surface was formed by evaporation; and this crust, after being broken up with poles, was drawn out and dried. The salt thus obtained was then placed in great earthenware pots, and was sent to market or dispatched to the Royal salt-houses. Whenever possible, it was conveyed by boat; but when fluvial transport was impossible, it was moved in horse-drawn carts.

In the exploitation of the natural resources of the country the part played by mining was as yet of no great importance, although in this industry a stimulating effect had been exerted by the Hundred Years' War, which had increased the demand for iron for use in the manufacture of artillery and by the loss of Normandy had closed to the French Government the source of supply upon which former Kings had been accustomed to rely. It had accordingly become an object of Royal policy to encourage the extraction of iron in other localities, and by the middle of the fifteenth century some progress had been made; but that this progress was satisfactory was denied by Louis XI, who complained that his kingdom lagged behind its neighbours in the utilization of its mineral resources, and lamented its imperfect exploitation of an important source of wealth. He thought that a development of mining activity in the kingdom would

¹ *Essai sur l'organisation du travail en Poitou depuis le XI^e siècle jusqu'à la Révolution*, Société des Antiquaires de l'Ouest, *Mémoires*, Series II, vol. xxi, pp. 212-13.

augment monetary stocks either directly by the production of gold or silver or indirectly by the production of the base metals, which must otherwise be purchased abroad. He therefore decided that Government grants should be given to all who stood in need of assistance to work their deposits, and decreed that all persons employed in the industry, whether natives or aliens, should be exempted from taxation. The decree was neither the first nor the last of Royal favours accorded to mining or of Royal endeavours for its betterment. By a series of ordinances of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries the Crown proclaimed its rights over all minerals, set up a mining administration, and conferred privileges and exemptions for the purpose of attracting foreign miners, contractors, and engineers. As a result of the rights claimed over minerals the Crown acquired power to grant mining licences, to require payment of royalties, to prospect and search for minerals on all properties, and to compel the exploitation of them by the landowners or, in case of need, to work them itself.

The fruits of all this legislative activity were a little disappointing, partly because the Government and the industry alike were lacking in practical experience, and partly because the prevailing obsession about the importance of the precious metals diverted to a field in which the country was poor an energy which might have been expended more profitably in fields in which it was tolerably rich. Gold was sought for, with very little success, in the Pyrenees, in the Cevennes, and in Brittany; and though it was won from the alluvial deposits of rivers and from auriferous quartz, the quantities were small. Silver was more widely distributed, for it existed, either alone or mixed with lead, in Lyonnais, Beaujolais, Forez, Nivernais, Burgundy, Auvergne, Languedoc, Rouergue, Dauphiné, Provence, and Brittany; but the search for it was not attended by much happier results. Copper existed, and was sought for, in the basins of the Rhône and the Tarn, in the county of Foix, and in the French Alps. Mercury was sought for in Normandy and Brittany; zinc ore was sometimes found in the search for copper and lead; tin was found in Dauphiné, Rouergue, Languedoc, and Brittany; and from Louis XI's time till the accession of Francis I copper sulphate, copperas, and sulphate of iron were

extracted in Beaujolais, Forez, and Languedoc. Yet it was not in these, but rather in her extensive and once neglected deposits of iron, that the true mineral wealth of France consisted. Iron was found in Nivernais and Auxerrois, in Perche and Normandy, in Angoumois and Berry, in Champagne and Burgundy, in Forez and Dauphiné, in the Limousin, in Périgord, and in the Pyrenees. In Auxerrois it had been worked since 1449, and in Nivernais for nearly as long. In Dauphiné a place called Allevard, which lies some twenty-three miles to the north-east of Grenoble, was the centre of the chief producing region.

To complete our survey of extractive activities, it should be added that marble, slate, and stone were quarried in most districts, the marbles of Languedoc, popular with Royal builders, enjoying a special repute, and that coal deposits were known to exist in many parts of the kingdom. Not much use was made of them. Coal was consumed chiefly by the metallurgical industries, and their requirements were supplied in part by imported fuel. For domestic purposes coal was not much esteemed: wood was greatly preferred as a fuel by the well-to-do, and peat was the substance mainly consumed in cottage grates. The prevailing distaste for coal seems to have arisen from the belief that its fumes were noxious, for we find the Faculty of Medicine issuing an official pronouncement that it might be burned with impunity. In connexion with coal it may be observed that chimneys were cleaned by itinerant sweeps, who walked the street, offering their services, and whose method was to attach a faggot to a cord and pull it up and down the flues.

From foreign countries, and especially from Germany, where mining development was far ahead of anything that France could show, came the persons upon whom the French industry was dependent for the necessary technical skill. German engineers managed French mines; German miners and carpenters built and maintained the subterranean galleries; and German metal-refiners handled the ores. It was partly because of the necessity for attracting and retaining foreign workmen that labour conditions were made exceptionally favourable in the mines, the comfort of the men being studied with a solicitude without parallel in any other part of the industrial field. When in 1455 Jacques Cœur's

mining ventures were taken over after his fall, the first care of the Crown was to see that the labour force should not have occasion to complain by reason of the change of masters. Abundant food was supplied to them, including wheaten bread, beef, mutton, pork and bacon, eggs and cheese, fresh and salt fish, vegetables, fruits, nuts, and spices, and wines both red and white. The lodging with which they were provided was as good as the board; and provision was made for their entertainment in hours of leisure, for their care in times of sickness, and for their spiritual welfare, a priest being sent to officiate in the chapel of the mining settlement on every Sunday of the year.

For a long time smelting processes were carried out in the old tradition of primitive inefficiency, but foundry methods tended to improve as mining progressed and as France learned the devices adopted in countries of superior experience and ingenuity. From Germany, for example, came the blast furnace, and to the same or some kindred influence were due the utilization of water-power and an increasing use of charcoal. The problem of fuel was important, and caused a concern which increased as the industry grew and, in growing, multiplied its demands. For since coal was but little used and the foundries were fed with wood, their consumption was seen to imply a serious threat to forest resources. The resources, it is true, were copious, but they were not inexhaustible,¹ and in the forests 'there was a great devastation to feed the countless foundries'. The devastation did not merely involve one of those lamentable sacrifices of natural beauty too often and too ruthlessly offered upon the altar of industrial progress; about that the sixteenth century would have felt no acute distress; but it did involve a wholesale destruction of building-materials, which mattered to everybody; and it also involved a serious diminution of the coverts so precious to the sporting owners of the woods. The nobles became greatly alarmed, and, if left to themselves, would doubtless have closed their preserves against timber-getters, charcoal-burners, and other spoil-sport myrmidons of industry. They were not left to themselves, however, for the

¹ At Vendevre, near Troyes, the forges were compelled to close down by reason of the exhaustion of the adjacent forests; Boutiot, *Histoire de la ville de Troyes*, vol. iii, pp. 335-6.

Crown took a hand in the interests of an industry of national importance, asserting a prerogative of control over all forests, whether upon Crown lands or not. At the same time *maîtres des forges* were given the same privileges as those already accorded to mining contractors, and were exempted from subsidies and *tailles*. 'Thanks to this protection and to the freedom left to enterprise, there was an enormous growth in the mining industries during the sixteenth century.'¹

¹ Boissonnade, *Le Socialisme d'État*, p. 75.

XXXV

ECONOMIC CONDITIONS

HANDICRAFTS AND INDUSTRIAL PRODUCTION

HAVING gained some acquaintance with the country's natural resources, we must now direct our attention to the branches of economic activity in which the commodities produced were the outcome of man's own creative energy. In this branch of our inquiry it would, no doubt, be logical to separate the making of commodities from the marketing of them and to distinguish between industry and trade; but the distinction is not one to which it is easy to adhere in describing the economic conditions of an age in which no such differentiation was in practice made, seeing that commodities were for the most part retailed by the persons by whom they had been produced. The most that I can accomplish in the examination which follows is to give to the industrial aspect such emphasis as the facts allow and to reserve for consideration in connexion with the subject of domestic trade such features as may be considered to have possessed an independent commercial character.

Amongst the handicrafts the foremost place was held by the textile industries, and amongst them the making of cloth enjoyed an importance enhanced by the fact that it was upon wool that mankind still depended almost entirely for its clothing. In the France of that time the manufacture of both cloth and linen was much diffused, for both were domestic industries with roots in the simpler conditions of a primitive past, in which each small region had been obliged so far as possible to satisfy its own needs and to content itself with the articles which it could itself produce. In those conditions the spinning-wheel and the loom had been set up wherever there were raw materials to feed them, and cloth and linen had been produced in cottage and castle throughout the land. Even in those days, however, there had arisen in the towns a class of professional weavers, who brought special aptitudes to the production of cloth, camlets, serges, fustians, and linen; and as society developed and trade grew, domestic industry had begun gradually to give

way before the advance of a more specialized commercial production. It is with this production as existing in the cloth trade at the beginning of the sixteenth century that we are here first concerned.

The chief producer of woollen textiles was Normandy, but the province had many rivals, for in the days of commercial, as of domestic, industry cloth was made wherever raw materials were produced, and that was in most parts of the country. Picardy and Artois, the Île-de-France and Champagne, the Loire towns, Poitou, and Languedoc were centres of activity; and there were other districts which contributed their share to the sum total of national output. But no competition had as yet impaired the reputation which the Norman towns had long ago acquired for the fineness and general excellence of their cloth. If Rouen stood at the head, it did not stand alone, for Caen and Bernay, Lisieux and Bayeux, Montivilliers and Saint-Lô, Louviers, Harfleur, Falaise, Argentan, Aumale, and various smaller centres contributed at once to the output and to the repute of the province. In Picardy and Artois textile fabrics were made at Arras and Saint-Omer, at Amiens and Abbeville, at Hesdin, Saint-Quentin, and Péronne. The conditions in this region were very favourable, for sheep-breeding on a big scale gave ample supplies of wool, there was a numerous peasantry to spin it, woad and madder were grown with success, and in the many rivers which watered the district it was easy to establish mills for crushing woad and fulling cloth. Not in all the towns, however, did the textile industry flourish equally. In Arras it was oppressed by the neighbourhood of Flanders, and although in the earlier Middle Ages the town had made cloth and had sold it far afield, the place had always worked under the shadow of Flemish competition, and now its products were chiefly such as were valued for their artistic qualities, a notable feature being the tapestries, which were famous even beyond the confines of Christendom. Abbeville also, which once had sold its products in Spain and Portugal, was to be reckoned among the towns that had known better days.

Languedoc was another region in which natural advantages were turned to account. Raw materials were plentiful: the wool of the province had been famous for centuries, for many

sheep were pastured on its thyme-sprinkled plains; woad was cultivated with success; the hills grew in profusion the plant from which the precious kermes for making vermilion dye could be obtained; and the cheaper dyes in use in the manufacture of common cloth could be imported upon advantageous terms. At the beginning of the sixteenth century the prosperity of the industry in this region had been revived by the fostering care of the Crown, both Louis XI and Charles VIII having granted privileges and exemptions, coupled with fiscal protection against Catalan competition. The result was seen in textile activity throughout the province, cloth being made at Nîmes and Montpellier, at Carcassonne and Narbonne, at Béziers, Albi, and Toulouse, and in numerous smaller centres. The best products of Languedocian looms commanded very high prices, the crimson fabrics of Montpellier, dyed by the use of kermes, enjoying a special repute.

Cloth was made at other places in the south, such as Marseilles in Provence and Rodez and Villefranche in Rouergue; but we must retrace our steps northwards to find other producing regions of any considerable note. In the Île-de-France Paris, Saint-Denis, and Pontoise, Senlis and Laon, Noyon, Compiègne, and Beauvais had each its looms, though the capital was important rather as a market than as a producing centre, its output being of no great account either in quantity or in quality. Beauvais was fortunate in its situation on a river whose waters had the property of making materials more soft and colours more vivid, and in the heyday of the Champagne fairs its trade had flourished; but the loss of its great contiguous market had dealt it a heavy blow, and its fortunes had long been on the decline. The textile industry of Champagne had lost its old prosperity for the same reason, its best market being taken from it by the decadence of the great fairs of the province; and at Châlons, Provins, Lagny, Vitry, Troyes, and Sens looms were now to be numbered only by the dozen where once they had been counted by the hundred. Rheims still enjoyed a large trade, turning out cloths, camlets, serges, and buntings: the serges were used for curtains, bed-covers, and door-hangings; and various uses were found for buntings, a light material made of wool or of wool and silk.

In the Loire valley cloth was made at Orleans and Tours, at Angers, and at Saumur; it was made at Le Mans and Chartres; and in Berry it was made at Issoudun and Bourges. In Poitou the manufacture of textiles had flourished early, because wool was abundant, but it had been the practice to export the best wool to Flanders, and local industry had produced only common cloth made with the inferior product of the Poitevin clip and with wool brought in from Gascony and Saintonge. The serges of the province had a good name for durability, however; there was a brisk trade in them; and fulling mills were built in good numbers on the rivers of the province. At the end of the fifteenth century textiles were produced, not only in the provincial capital, but also at Niort, Saint-Maixent, Châtellerault, Fontenay, Parthenay, and Bressuire; and in the markets of Touraine these products competed not unsuccessfully with those of Normandy and Berry.

In Brittany cloth-making was of more recent introduction, for it had been begun by weavers who had fled from Normandy during the troubled days of the wars; but turning to good account the abundant supplies of wool yielded by Breton flocks, and enlisting the support of an industrious peasantry, it had quickly risen to the place of the most important among local handicrafts. Fougères, Dinan, Guingamp, Montfort, Montcontour, Montauban, and many smaller places had grown into flourishing centres of production. The greater part of the output of Breton looms was sent to Rennes to be dyed, and Rennes cloth possessed a reputation which enabled it to command a sale in distant markets.

The cloth trade was a large employer of labour, for the processes of manufacture were numerous, and many hands were needed to turn out finished cloth. To begin with, wool received in the raw state had to be sorted into different qualities, then scoured, then teased and carded or combed, and then spun. These processes were sometimes performed by the workmen who would handle the wool in later stages, but as a rule the preliminary work of carding and spinning was done in country districts by women and children. The better-quality wool, from which the best cloth was made, was usually of foreign origin, the bulk of it coming from England and Spain; and the use of native wools was confined for the

most part to the manufacture of materials of inferior grade. The preliminary processes being completed, the wool passed into the hands of those by whom the cloth was to be woven. In the main centres of industrial activity, where the craft was controlled by rich and influential trade guilds, rules of the most meticulous exactness prescribed the methods to be followed in the production of different cloths and fabrics; and if upon inspection by guild officers any defect were discovered, or if the weight were found to be defective, the cloth was seized and destroyed. Though by no means then finished, cloth could be sold in the state in which it left the loom, and the small man would sometimes dispose of his product at that stage through reluctance or inability to bear the cost of the remaining manufacturing processes. For cloth leaving the loom in the raw had yet to be fulled, to be washed and 'tentered' or stretched, to be teased, cut, brushed, and smoothed, and finally to be dyed. Fulling was an operation of which the object was to turn a porous fabric into one possessing solidity and firmness; it consisted in scouring, cleansing, thickening by beating in water, and smoothing. The operation was performed in a trough or vat, either with the feet or with rammers operated by hand or by hydraulic power; the use of the foot was generally preferred, and in some towns, jealous for the reputation of their cloth, it was a rule that the town mark should be affixed only to cloth fulled in the older and the better way. The process of fulling was carried out in two operations with a washing in between, the cloth being plunged in a bath of hot water and clay. Afterwards the cloth was passed to the shearmen, who dried it and then restored the nap by combing off rough wool with hedge-hog skins and teasels; they then stretched it with blocks, pulleys, and tenter-hooks to the required length and breadth; and finally they trimmed the surface with shears, and smoothed it to make the wool lie as evenly as possible in one direction. In large measure it was upon the dexterity of the shearman that the cloth depended for its surface, and as a result it had become a common rule that each master should have his own mark. As some of these operations required a considerable expenditure of muscular force, there were rules against the employment of women in these branches of manufacture.

It then remained to dye the cloth, unless, as often happened, it was to be made up undyed, seeing that cloths of white, black, brown, and grey could be had in natural colours, and that undyed fabrics, being cheaper, were commonly preferred by the less well-to-do. Dyeing was done either by dyers, organized as a separate guild, or by the persons by whom the cloth had been made; in the big centres dyeing was organized as an independent trade, and in small places the dyeing process was carried out by the weavers themselves. In the process of dyeing two mediums were required, the colouring-matter and the mordant by which the colour was fixed. The mordant most commonly used in the Middle Ages was alum, and the chief dyeing agents were woad, madder, kermes, and reseda or dyer's weed, with some use of saffron, brazil-wood, orchil, and copperas.

The story of alum, which was used in dressing leather and skins and in treating silk and parchment as well as in the dyeing of cloth, is one at which it is worth while in passing to glance. Alum mines had long been known in western and southern Europe and in northern Africa, but the output of these mines, being small, had mostly been consumed in local industry, and, broadly speaking, Europe until the fifteenth century had depended upon the East for its supplies, which were imported and distributed by the Venetians and the Genoese. In 1462 an event happened by which the situation was wholly changed, for in that year a certain Paduan went to a place called Tolfa, near Civit -Vecchia in the Papal States, and there, more or less by accident, made a discovery of far-reaching importance. The Paduan at that time was employed in the Papal Court, but before the capture of Constantinople by the Turks he had run a dye-works in the Eastern capital, and in so doing had come to know the regions from which the alum of the East was obtained. Whilst walking about at Tolfa, he noticed the presence of a species of *ilex* which he had previously observed growing in proximity to the alum deposits of Asia Minor; and he surmised that in one case as in the other the ground would be found upon examination to contain alum. Impressed by the theory, his master, Pope Paul II, got miners from the Levant, carried out investigations, and had the satisfaction of finding himself possessed of an extensive alum deposit of first-rate quality.

The new alum was much better than the old, and Europe would have been glad to buy it; but on the strength of a Papal monopoly the concessionaires of the Tolfa mines raised their prices to exorbitant levels; the trade in an indispensable commodity was thrown into confusion; and England and the Low Countries, defying Papal admonitions, continued to supply their needs with alum of oriental origin. Matters were finally adjusted by a treaty which provided that Tolfa was to supply alum, and was to supply it at an agreed price. Though this arrangement was satisfactory to some consuming countries, in France the dependence upon the Tolfa mines was regarded with anxiety by a Government which saw a million *livres* paid away annually in purchases of the mineral, and would have dearly liked to restrict or abolish the trade. Accordingly Italian workmen were sent for and were set to work to search for alum in the hope that some discovery might make France independent of foreign supplies. The efforts being spasmodic and unfruitful, France remained tributary to Italy for an essential ingredient of her dye-vats.

Before the introduction of indigo the chief ingredient for dyeing in blue was woad, or, as it was called in commerce, pastel. 'The false and pernicious drug called indigo' was not unknown in fifteenth-century Europe, but it was not imported in quantities sufficient to make its competition felt, since the long overland journey by which it reached Europe made its price prohibitive for industrial purposes. Pastel therefore enjoyed an unquestioned supremacy for the production of a colour which by reason of its durability¹ was generally popular. It was also used in conjunction with madder to give a very dark blue, in conjunction with the same ingredient or with kermes to give violet or purple, and in conjunction with the yellows to give green. A very dark violet, called *mourée*, was got by immersion in woad, followed by dipping in brazil or madder mixed with shellac. A lighter shade was obtained by increasing the quantity of brazil. Red and rose came from madder or from madder and brazil combined; and scarlets, carmines, and vermilions were obtained by the use of the insect called kermes, which was akin to

¹ It is interesting to learn that the uniforms of the London police are still dyed with woad, because the colour is indestructible: Hurry, *The Woad Plant and Its Dye*, p. 213.

cochineal. The use of nut-husks, ox-blood, and elder-bark, which yielded inferior and evanescent dyes, was prohibited by the rules of the craft guilds.

The influence in the cloth trade of tendencies destined to produce great changes was becoming manifest. In the first place, it was growing apparent that production was to be affected profoundly by mechanical invention, for the mill had been introduced, and operations once performed by hand might now be carried out by the machine. The consequences were such as might have been looked for from such a development: the expenditure of labour was lessened, production was increased, quality was lowered, price was reduced, and demand was stimulated. The change was strenuously resisted by the guilds of the great manufacturing centres, innately conservative, jealous for the reputation of their marks, and not unreasonably apprehensive of the effects upon their trade of the competition of shoddy fabrics cheaply produced. Resistance, however, was vain, for the smaller places were quick to see and to seize the chance offered by rapid and cheap manufacturing methods, and in the very citadels of conservatism there were workmen whose lot was hard, whose prospects were poor, and who were glad to escape from the tyranny of the guilds and to try their luck with the new processes in the cheaper and healthier environment of the country village. The new fabrics were less durable than the old, but they cost much less, and so were to the liking of a people whose characteristics, as noted by a Venetian critic, included a tendency to tire of things that lasted too long. Despite this competition, the old and costly materials contrived to keep their place, for the times were prosperous, wealth was increasing, money was being distributed more widely, and a brisk demand for the best, at whatever price, was maintained by the luxurious fashions of the Renaissance period.

Secondly, the cloth trade was the first among industries to show signs of the advent of a capitalistic organization. Medieval trades were planned to supply a limited number of articles to a closed local market, and the articles were produced by small men working in a modest way, each with a few journeymen and one or two apprentices. The cloth trade was not of a kind to be confined for long within the

bounds of a narrow convention. Its technical processes were more advanced than those of most other trades; it was carried on upon a large scale, with a consequent need to accumulate large quantities of raw materials; and its output was finding an outlet in distant markets, where it was obliged to encounter foreign competition. The small man might contrive to do business in the old-fashioned way in the primitive conditions of the country district, but in the more highly organized centres of production he could not maintain his independence against the economic pressure of a changing trade. In these centres the trade was controlled by the clothier, whose capital resources enabled him to operate on a wholesale scale, and who caused goods to be produced in large quantities by paid labour. Sometimes the workmen would come in to work under the clothier's own roof in the medieval counterpart of a modern factory; but as a rule the clothier bought wool, gave it out to be made up into cloth by weavers living in the suburbs or in country villages, and then had the processes of manufacture completed in fulling mills and dye-works of his own. Even when the weaver worked in his own home, the loom was often the property of the clothier who employed him.

The manufacture of textiles of flax and hemp was still in the main a domestic industry, and was far from possessing the economic importance of the woollen trade; but fine linen was produced commercially in various centres, and napkins, pillow-cases, night-caps, and shrouds made of flax were in use in all well-to-do households. The prevalence of linen was the greater in that cotton was but little used, and that a poor man, who wished to avoid the expense of wool, had to look to flax, coarsely woven, to provide a less expensive substitute. Linen was produced commercially in a good many districts, Rouen, Louviers, and Morigny, Rheims and Troyes, Laon, Compiègne, and Saint-Quentin being the chief centres of production, whilst Vitré was famous for a canvas of European repute. Though the linen of the Low Countries was considered to be the finest made, the products of Rheims, Troyes, Louviers, and Saint-Quentin were almost as good and almost as well known, the napkins or serviettes, called *touailles*—whence our word 'towels'—being of special excellence and fit to command a sale even in the markets of

Italy and the East. Indeed, it may be said that apart from damask and a few linens of the highest class France was unrivalled in the production of flaxen and hempen textiles, her output ranging through table-linen, fine articles of apparel, sails, and sacking from the finest to the coarsest. Linen was sold bleached and unbleached, dyed and undyed, and patterned and plain.

The flax and hemp which furnished French industry with its raw materials were for the most part grown in the kingdom, but there was some importation of Egyptian flax, which was highly esteemed. The processes of manufacture occupied several trades. First, the raw material was handled by the *liniers* and *chanvriers*, who respectively made up flax and hemp for the weavers and for domestic use, soaking them, drying them, beating them, and then hackling or combing them. In Paris in 1485 the two guilds were fused in one corporation; but the capital was not a place in which the making of linen had ever prospered, and at the same period the Parisian spinners or winders and twistors, called *filandiers*, who drew the tow into thread, were a small and moribund community. Thread, when made, passed to the *tisserands de toile*, who wove it into linen either in their own workshops or in the houses of customers. Guild regulations prescribed the size of the woof and the number of threads, and the finished fabric was checked for accuracy of compliance with official requirements. The craft of the *fuseliers* made spindles and distaffs; that of the *navetiers* made shuttles; and the *cordiers* made rope either with materials supplied by the *chanvriers* or with lime-tree bark and hair. The *chanevassiers* made nothing, their province being retail trade. Many girls were employed in the linen trade, and their reputation was not of the best. The circumstance caused concern to the authorities, because it was by no means uncommon for the daughters of the well-to-do to be sent to the workshops of sempstresses, to receive instruction in needlework.

Tapestry has been defined as 'painting by the weaving of coloured threads, intertwined on lines stretched vertically (*haute lisse* = high warp) or horizontally (*basse lisse* = low warp), which become one substance or web combining lines and tones'; and this definition has for us the merit of explaining technical terms which are of constant occurrence in the

literature of the period. Here, however, we need concern ourselves with technicalities no further than to note that the high-warp loom produces the best results, though the process of manufacture is exceedingly slow and therefore very costly. Long a recreation of ladies in the houses of the great, the making of tapestry had become an industry in a few French towns; Arras had for many years been famous for its products, and in the sixteenth century meritorious tapestries were also produced in Paris, Limoges, Angers, Moulins, and Orleans, whilst commoner goods were turned out at Rheims, Amiens, Rouen, Aubusson, and some other places. The industry was one which was growing in importance as luxury increased. 'In the houses of the *bourgeoisie* tapestries played the part which is now played by wall-papers. They were sold by the *aune* when they were *bocages*, *verdures*, or *pay-sages avec figures*, by the piece when they were carpets, curtains, or covers for beds or seats. Tapestries of artistic value were sold by the piece or by the room, the room usually depicting the life of an historical or mythological hero, and the tapestries being sold in sets.'¹ Hangings of this sort were very costly, and as by no means all of them were the products of French looms, the luxurious fashions of the Renaissance, which popularized their use, led to considerable purchases from Flanders, Italy, and the Levant. To curb the expenditure on foreign articles, Francis I would eventually set up a Government factory at Fontainebleau with the Superintendent of Royal Palaces to direct it and with Primaticcio and Jules Romain to furnish cartoons. For an ampler acquaintance with that venture we must, however, wait until at a later stage we seek to familiarize ourselves with the intellectual and artistic conditions of the French Renaissance.

Another source of anxiety to the Government was the expenditure on silks, velvets, satins, damasks, and cloth of gold and of silver, which were all imported from Italy and the East. Even so early as Louis XI's time it was estimated that 400,000 or 500,000 gold crowns were lost to the kingdom annually by this trade, and anxious rulers complained that the great outlay of their subjects upon sumptuous apparel unsuitable to their condition was gravely prejudicial to the common weal. The trade was comparatively new, for

¹ Goris, *Colonies marchandes méridionales à Anvers*, p. 284.

the silk products of earlier ages had been of a simpler kind. Silkworms and the use of silk had been introduced into Europe in the sixth century, but so late as the thirteenth century the culture of the mulberry was but little developed in the West, and in all Christian countries silk was still scarce and dear. But a change was then at hand, for the Crusaders had introduced a taste for rich stuffs, Italy was beginning to make hangings and garments with silk of Eastern origin, and at the great fairs of Champagne silk was dealt in both in the raw and in the finished state. In the form in which it was first organized in France the silk industry gave occupation to several communities. There were the silk-spinners, who wound, twisted, and spun silk thread for weaving; the *laceurs de fil et de soie*, who made cords or laces for fastening armour, attaching flasks and bags, and affixing seals to documents, and who also made a sort of ribbon or flat braid; the *passementiers*, or fringe-makers, who made fringes, and trimmings, and embroideries for head-dresses and hangings; the makers of ornamental ribbons for shoulder-knots, belts, and garters; the weavers of materials for head-dresses; and the makers of hats adorned with osprey and peacock plumes. The fact that in our period the *laceurs de soie* had come to be known as *rubaniers*, and that their province was the manufacture of ribbons and fringes, belts, hair-ribbons, and curtain-bands, implies a simplification of the industrial system, involving the merger in a common craft of the separate branches mentioned in the earlier organization of the industry.

It was not in relation to these crafts that Governments felt anxiety, for it was not by the purchase of frills, trimmings, and toilet accessories that adverse trade balances were piled up, but by the import of the rich and costly materials which Italian example and Renaissance fashion prescribed for the making of costumes. As these stuffs came from Italy and the East, the trade in them centred in Lyons. It was therefore to this city that Louis XI directed his attention when in 1466 he conceived the idea of reducing imports by the establishment of a domestic manufacture. His plan was to introduce Italian weavers and to set them up in business by the grant of privileges and exemptions and by the gift of a subsidy of 2,000*l.* The plan aroused small enthusiasm

in Lyons, perhaps because the Municipality was expected to provide the subsidy, or perhaps because its members were interested in an import trade, to which domestic manufacture was likely to be unfavourable. Lacking financial support, and discouraged by civic disfavour, the new industry languished, and in 1469 the King determined to transfer it from Lyons to Tours, the former town being required to pay for the move and the latter to put up 6,000*l.* to get the new-comer upon its legs. Tours liked this plan no better than Lyons had liked the other, but Louis XI could not with impunity be defied, and in its own despite Touraine found itself endowed with a lucrative trade as a result of the King's initiative and persistence. Accorded fiscal protection by Louis XI's successor, and already considerable at Tours before the end of the century, the silk trade was destined before long to become one of the chief sources of national wealth.

In the fulfilment of this destiny the industry, if it owed much to Royal favour, owed more to the influence of fashion and not a little to the enterprise of Italians naturalized in the city in which it had first come abortively to birth. In Lyons a change had come over mercantile opinion since the place had permitted Louis XI's infant industry to perish of inanition, for the Italian wars had come with their decisive influence upon French taste, and in their own expanding trade as well as in the growing prosperity of Tours the merchants of Lyons saw a proof that Louis had taken a long-sighted view. They were faced, too, with a difficulty which had not been there to trouble their city in 1466, for population had begun to grow rapidly through the success of the fairs, and, since the chief result of the fairs was to enrich merchants and bankers, a numerous proletariat was left in a distressed condition, for which the provision of employment by new manufactures seemed to offer an apt remedy. Italian workmen coming to the city were accordingly welcomed, whilst for political as well as economic reasons the Government took the same line: Francis felt the inevitable anxiety of the ruler to check the export of bullion; and he was also actuated by a desire to injure the Genoese, the great manufacturers of velvet, who had joined the ranks of his enemies.

At that time there was living in Lyons a certain Étienne Turquet, a native of Chieri in Piedmont, who had set up as a merchant trading in mercery and drapery, in salt fish, and in the goods which formed the staple of the wholesale trade with Flanders. Turquet studied the conditions of the silk trade, and concluded that it was within the power of energy, intelligence, experience, and ambition to effect an improvement in the manufacture of precious stuffs. He imparted his plans to a Genoese, Bartolommeo Naris, who had a practical knowledge of silk-manufacture, and the two resolved to embark as partners in a new adventure. The project was well received: in 1536 the King granted life-long privileges and exemptions to workmen employed in the new trade, and the Municipality promised a subvention of 500 *écus* a year for five years for 'the new manufacture of velvets and silk stuffs', whilst at the same time excusing Turquet from payment of all sums owing to the town for dues on his other businesses. In 1540, despite the protests of injured rivals, a Royal decree made Lyons the sole entrepôt for foreign silks, with the result that the town became a privileged market for the purchase of raw materials. In spite of all obstacles, of the opposition of importers, and of the competition of old-established Italian and Spanish looms, the new industry grew steadily, marching forward towards a future bright with golden promise.

These examples were fruitful: that which had been done at Tours and at Lyons was presently copied at Paris and Orleans, at Amiens and Rouen, at Poitiers and Bordeaux, at Nîmes, Montpellier, and Toulouse. I must not be tempted to stray too far beyond the bounds of the period with which I purport in this volume to deal, but I may, perhaps, be pardoned, if I tell briefly the story of the establishment of silk-manufacture at Toulouse as a sequel to the tale of Turquet's experiment. Not long after Turquet had set up his looms at Lyons it occurred to a rich merchant of Toulouse, Pierre de Lancefoc, that it might be possible to do in his city what others had done elsewhere; the conveniences were as great, living was as cheap, surrounding districts were fertile, and a great import of silk stuffs pointed to the existence of a market waiting to be captured by local enterprise. Lancefoc was in business relations with a maker of silk

stuffs at Lucca, one Alessandro Salvini, and him he persuaded to come to Toulouse and join in the initiation of a manufacturing business. The municipal authorities favouring the project, foreign workmen were brought in, local craftsmen were put under instruction, and the peasantry of the district were taught to grow mulberries and rear silkworms. The King was also persuaded to grant to Toulouse the same privileges as were enjoyed by the other silk-weaving towns. Thanks to these favours, to the activity of Lancefoc, and to the ingenuity of Salvini the new manufacture prospered rapidly, and presently received a charter of incorporation as a *métier juré*. 'The silk trade', wrote a Venetian ambassador at the end of the reign, 'is very important. Factories for the production of silk stuffs have been established . . . and make up the silk which comes from Italy and Spain. The industry is steadily growing. . . . They have even begun to plant mulberries and rear silkworms, so as to produce raw materials for themselves, so far as their climate allows.'

There were a few secondary handicrafts connected with or subsidiary to the textile industries. *Tailleurs de robes* made coats and overcoats out of cloth supplied to them by their customers. Their trade was a prosperous one, for since there were not as yet any dressmakers, the tailors made women's costumes as well as men's clothes, and even in provincial cities of no great size or importance, such as Poitiers, they were organized in corporations as early as the middle of the fifteenth century. The *doubletters*, who had originally made the garments worn beneath armour, were now employed in lining garments made by tailors, and the *pourpointiers* had come into existence when fashion had brought in the doublet of rich-coloured material known as the *pourpoint*. A special trade, that of the *chaussiers* or *chaussetiers*, made the stockings or leggings which formed the lower part of the garment known as *chausses*. Finding their business prejudiced by the activities of the *fripriers*, or old-clothesmen, who cleaned and pressed *chausses*, making them look like new ones, the *chaussetiers* demanded with success that the *fripriers* should be restrained from operations which amounted to an infringement of a trade monopoly. Bonnets, gloves, mittens, and stockings were products of the guild of bonnet-makers, the 'bonnet' in early days having been a cap of wool knitted by

hand, and gloves having also been of wool and known as gloves 'de bonnet'. It is not known when knitted stockings first began to take the place of the cloth coverings long used for the protection of the leg, but it is probable that they began to come into general use about the beginning of the sixteenth century. It has been conjectured that knitted stockings were a Scottish invention, since the French knitters chose a Scottish saint for their patron and had a tradition that the first stockings had come to them from their patron's country. The makers of hats, at one time united with the bonnet-makers, had separated from them at the end of the fifteenth century. Headgear of wool or of cloth was made at Rouen, Bourges, Lyons, Dijon, Valence, Paris, and places in Auvergne. The *chapeliers de feutre* turned out hats made of lamb's wool, white camlet, and beaver; the *chapeliers de coton* made hats and bonnets of cotton and wool; and bonnets of silk were turned out by another trade. Fashions in headgear changed rapidly, and there was incessant variation in the materials employed and in the ornamentation with fur, silk, gold, precious stones, and pearls.

Buttons were very numerous in the costumes of both sexes, it being estimated that there were four dozen or more on the dress of a woman and half as many again on a man's doublet. The *boutonniers*, who originally produced such of them as were made of brass or copper, were later fused with the *passementiers*, with whose activities as makers of trimmings we have already become acquainted; the rosary-makers turned them out when they were of ivory, horn, or bone; and they came from the goldsmiths when made of a precious metal, an order for an enormous quantity of gold buttons being placed by Francis I with a goldsmith on the Pont-au-Change.

Finally, there was embroidery, which in those days as in these was done chiefly in the home, being an industry in which women excelled. But then as now there were workers specially trained and of exceptional skill, to whom orders for articles of the highest class were entrusted; and tabards, chasubles, the banners of towns, and the hangings used on special occasions were the work of the *brodeurs*. Their products were very advanced, for their handicraft is one which depends, not upon mechanical inventions or other modern

aids, but upon manual dexterity, patient application, and the expenditure of time, of which an unhurried age knew how to be prodigal. In costume embroidery played a much more important part in those days than in these, being applied lavishly to the dress of both sexes; shirts, breeches, head-gear, doublets, and the sleeves of cloaks were commonly enriched by the broiderer's art.

The provision trades were amongst the most active of the time, prospering greatly through the propensity of all sections of the population to indulge themselves as thoroughly as the circumstances of each allowed. Strangers seldom failed to note the high standard of living which prevailed, observing with astonishment that in France shopkeepers and other commoners aspired to eat meat and game and other good things, which elsewhere were regarded as luxuries for the well-to-do. The result was that hotels and inns were very numerous and that the provision trades enjoyed a prodigious vitality; butchers and bakers, pastry-cooks and cook-shop keepers, fishmongers and greengrocers abounded; and it was conjectured—perhaps somewhat rashly—that a third part of the population got a living by the trade in food and drink.

The part played by bakers and millers in the sixteenth century does not quite tally with that which these names suggest to-day. Now the baker contents himself with baking bread, and leaves it to the miller to make and sell flour and to make speculative purchases of grain. In the sixteenth century it was the baker who made the speculative purchases, and all that the miller did was to grind corn supplied to him by the baker, being paid as a rule by a percentage of the corn milled. Hence milling was not very lucrative, and the miller was usually an artisan rather than a tradesman. In rural districts milling retained its feudal characteristics, the right to keep a mill being a seigneurial privilege or *banalité*, and the miller operating under a licence from the lord. To the seigneurial mill, so long as it was working, every commoner might be compelled to bring his corn, which made the *banalité* a lucrative right. It was this circumstance, coupled with the difficulty of transporting corn, which explained the multiplicity of mills. Every river and brook was encumbered

with them; there were often four or five within the confines of a single parish; and they were to be found in large numbers in and around all large towns. Their prevalence on the rivers was, as we have seen, a serious obstacle to navigation. When so placed, the mills, together with the millers, who usually lived over them, were exposed to very real dangers by flood and drifting ice, dangers which the mills themselves intensified by the obstruction which they offered to the flow of water, so that they might in a measure be regarded as the architects of their own destruction. It is not without significance that the name, Pont-aux-Moulins, should have become attached to the Grand-Pont, destroyed by flood.

Milling processes were still crude, the plant being primitive and the personnel small. In common with others engaged in the grain trade, millers were subject to strict rules to prevent extortion and fraud. Their machinery had to be of standard shape, to prevent loss by settlement of flour in inaccessible corners; they might not grind meslin or rye in the same mill as wheat; required to return to their customer an amount of flour proportionate to the grain supplied, they were forbidden to increase the weight by the addition of moisture or of sand or bran; and there were provisions to prevent 'corners' and factitious enhancements of price. The miller, who usually paid rent in kind, was as a rule himself remunerated in kind by a proportion of the grain milled, an arrangement convenient in times of currency shortage, but not unprolific of disputes.

Purchasing grain to bake bread and sell it, the baker had a better commercial opening than the miller, but even his opportunities were restricted. Many of his customers employed him merely to bake bread from flour or grain supplied by themselves, and even in towns it was a common practice for housewives to knead dough and either themselves to bake it or to have it baked in a public oven. Corn, when ground for a customer, was returned to him as it came from the mill, and it was for him to sift it and knead the dough. To entrust this work to a baker was long regarded as an unwarrantable extravagance. There had therefore arisen two provinces in what is now regarded as the single domain of the baker: there was the *boulangier*, who sifted flour and kneaded dough, and there was the *fournier*, who baked the dough when thus pre-

pared. The trades were sometimes united and sometimes distinct, with a tendency towards coalition which increased as time went on. The business of the private baker had at one time been much curtailed by the existence of the *four banal*, the seigneurial oven, to which the baking of all commoners must be given; but as seigneurial ovens were given up, fell into decay, or were bought out, the position of the private baker began sensibly to mend. In general his business was in the nature of a luxury trade, since he catered for a moneyed class, which did not bake for itself, and demanded an article superior to that in common use. The bread eaten by the peasant and the artisan was made from an ill-sifted mixture, in which rye or barley usually predominated, to which maize, buckwheat, garlic, and dried peas were not infrequently added, and in which in times of scarcity there might even be an admixture of the black vetches normally fed to pigeons. The baker was seldom asked to bake any but the white breads consumed in well-to-do houses. These breads were usually made of a mixture of wheat and rye, for wheat was always dear, and pure wheaten bread was a luxury found only on the tables of the very rich. Fancy breads akin to cakes or pastries came also from bakers' ovens. A world haunted by the fear of dearth decreed that no corn suitable for food should be used for other purposes; but spoiled grain and offals were allowed to be used in the production of paste, powder, and starch and of an ingredient employed in dyeing.

Though the miller and baker of to-day need feel no jealousy of forerunners, whose trade was but meagrely remunerative, the modern butcher might reasonably regret an age in which some at least of those who plied his trade were in a position of privileged prosperity. There were few large towns in which the butchers did not form a wealthy and influential community, whilst in the capital their position was one of altogether exceptional privilege. Monopolist occupants of the meat market, the butchers of the Grande-Boucherie of Paris formed a powerful corporation; jealously guarded against the intrusion of strangers, the corporation had for generations been recruited by the succession of sons to fathers; and the consequence was the foundation of rich families, no longer plying their trade, but thriving

on the proceeds of their lucrative monopoly and of the profits of the wholesale trade in meat and live stock, which was largely in their hands. Not all who wore a butcher's apron were on a par with the plutocrats of the *Grande-Boucherie*, for both in Paris and in the provinces the majority of butchers operated on a humbler plane, selling meat, pork, hams and tongues, sausages and saveloys, chitterlings and tripe. In places where the flesh of the goat was eaten, this also was sold by the butcher; and when goat's flesh or venison was offered for sale, the head or the hide of the animal had to be displayed on the stall. Till the end of the fifteenth century pork, the most popular of all meats, was sold raw by the ordinary butcher, the pork-butcher dealing almost exclusively in meat that had been cooked; but the pork-butchers grew in importance with the increase in numbers and prosperity of the working classes, for whom they catered; and in Paris, after a grant of corporative organization in 1475, they were authorized by an ordinance of 1513 to go into the markets and make their own purchases of pigs. This ordinance was one of the fruits of Louis XII's solicitude for the poor, for he knew that the pork-butcher's trade was of great importance to them, and believed that prices in that trade could be lowered by the abolition of the butchers' monopoly for the supply of pigs.

Public health was not a matter which gave much concern to the sixteenth century, but the possibilities of evil in an unregulated butchers' trade were so patent that the least perceptive age could not fail to be aware of them. The trade was accordingly subjected to precise regulations and to daily visits of inspection by officials, whose licence was required before sales could be made. Beasts for slaughter must be healthy and whole, without blemish or wound, and it was forbidden to sell the flesh of any animal which had died of illness or accident or to offer meat of doubtful quality or suspect origin. Meat had to be displayed on the stalls; it might not be kept in the butcher's house; and it might be offered for sale as fresh meat only for a specified time after slaughter, though, if not disposed of in the fresh state, it might afterwards be salted. In the absence of a public abattoir the slaughtering of beasts presented difficulties, the butcher being apt to study his own convenience in deciding

whether to kill them on his own premises or in the market or even in the public street; and not only so, but the work was done so carelessly that butchers had to be ordered explicitly to dispose of blood and offals in some suitable manner and not to deposit them in thoroughfares or before churches and public buildings. Hides and suet the butcher sold to the tanner and the chandler, but he was required to satisfy the needs of private purchasers before selling to other trades. Finally, no meat might be offered for sale during the period of Lenten abstinence.

On the border-line between butchers and bakers were the *oubliers* and *pâtissiers*, vendors respectively of wafers and light pastry and of pasties of meat, fish, and cheese. The trade of the pastry-cook was of recent origin, having made its appearance in the fifteenth century, but its progress had been rapid, and in the sixteenth century it was of an importance to warrant corporative organization. So popular were pastries and patties that even in the villages vendors of them might be found. Apart from cracknels, which were still made by bakers, the *pâtissiers* had a monopoly for the sale of pastries and patties, and they also sold gingerbread, the makers of which had not yet been permitted to separate themselves from the parent body. The trade was subject to rigorous prohibitions against the use of meat or fish that was bad, cheese that was high, milk that had been skimmed, or cream that had turned; and all articles found to offend against the rules were publicly burned in front of the offending maker's shop. *Oubliers* sold the *oublies* or wafers, from which they took their name; and it was their privilege to make wafers for the Eucharist and the little cakes called *nieules*, which were used in religious ceremonies.

Somewhat akin to these were the cook-shop and eating-house keepers. The *rôtisseurs* appear first as a separate community in letters patent of Louis XII in 1509, succeeding to the position which the *cuisiniers* had formerly held. The right was reserved to them to truss, dress, and roast poultry and game and lambs and kids, their business being of a better quality than that of the old *cuisiniers*, who, cooking butchers' meat and pork-butchers' meat and making black puddings, had catered mainly for a working-class clientele. The *rôtisseurs* were in frequent conflict with the poulterers, who had

also to face the competition of itinerant street hawkers. In Paris the poulterers admitted the right of the *rôtisseurs* to sell roast goose, but claimed that dealings in all other poultry and game were their own exclusive privilege, and this claim the *Prévôt* upheld. The *rôtisseurs* appealed to the Parlement, which had then to adjudicate upon a nice question: it was clear that the appellants had trespassed upon the poulterers' preserves, but they had done so by the authority of their revised statutes and therefore with the sanction of the Crown, whilst the poulterers, who had gone beyond their own statutes in selling poultry and game cooked, did not come to court with their hands clean. A lively dispute ensued, the Crown upholding the *rôtisseurs*, the *Prévôt* continuing to back the poulterers, and the public suffering, as it is apt to do during industrial disputes, by confusion in the trade, scarcity of supplies, and a sharp rise in prices. Finally, after half a century of acrimonious dispute, the Parlement upheld the contention of the *rôtisseurs* and restricted the poulterers to dealings in uncooked birds. Ruin speedily overtook the defeated guild.

Midway between *rôtisseurs* and hotel-keepers came the *traiteurs-cuisiniers*, who were a sort of boarding-house keeper, providing lodging as well as board, and occasionally providing banquets by contract. In common with innkeepers they were expected to provide adequate sanitary accommodation, and to prevent improprieties between their guests and their maids; and should they have occasion to visit their stables or hay-lofts after dark, they were required to carry a closed lantern, to obviate the risk of fire by the use of a naked light.

The fish trade was of great importance, having regard to the numerous fast-days and seasons of abstinence when meat might not be eaten. Sea fish was eaten fresh where it could be obtained in good condition, and was carried to inland markets by pack-horse, cart, or boat; but transport difficulties made it necessary that most inland markets should be supplied either with salt fish or with fish taken in neighbouring rivers and ponds. Fishmongers dealt in all kinds of fish. In Paris, which prided itself upon its regular and abundant supplies, the fish upon arrival was taken to the market, where the fish salesmen or *vendeurs de poisson de mer* sold it to the fishmongers and other retailers. Unloading began at

9.0 a.m.; different kinds of fish had to be kept separate; and baskets had to be in good condition. The usual solicitude to safeguard the interests of consumers was shown in other rules governing this trade.

In the grocery and greengrocery trades the retailers were originally of two sorts: one had sold bread, salt, sea fish, and spices; the other had sold fruit and vegetables, butter, eggs, and cheese. The trade of the *fruitier-regrattier*, as these small dealers and hawkers were called, was open to all, but some branches had succeeded in establishing themselves in a privileged position, the grocers of the capital with their fourteenth-century charter being a notable instance. The fruit and vegetables which formed the staple of the trade were onions, shallots, chives, leeks, and garlic, beans, spinach, cabbage, lettuce, celery, beet, turnips, pumpkins, mustard, parsley, gherkins and cucumbers, apples, pears, and medlars, plums and cherries, grapes and figs, and walnuts, chestnuts, hazel-nuts, and almonds. Asparagus, artichokes, and the green pea were known, but were costly luxuries. Butter, fresh and salted, was brought to market in earthenware pots, the product of Brittany enjoying a special repute. In early days the grocers, or traders *en gros*, had been apothecaries also, the goods in which they dealt being used both as condiments and as drugs, and their stock-in-trade consisting both of medicines, electuaries, medicinal roots, and herbs, and of ginger, pepper, cinnamon, cloves, cummin, anise, fennel, wax and candles, sugar, and liquorice. In those days the doctors had been accustomed to make up their own prescriptions, and the vendor of drugs had been a mere tradesman, needing no scientific knowledge of the commodities he handled. A change had come over medical practice in this particular, however, and the Faculty now left the mixing of prescriptions to apothecaries, as they also abandoned surgery to the barbers, because they thought that manual labour was dishonouring to a learned profession. It then became necessary in the public interest that the apothecary should possess a knowledge of pharmacy, and the statutes which were conferred upon the grocer-apothecaries in the middle of the fourteenth century required that a dispensing apothecary either should be able himself to read medical prescriptions or should employ an assistant who could do it for him. For

the evils of unregulated trade were manifest: 'ignorant and inexperienced persons take upon themselves to make up prescriptions, mix medicines, and deal in spices, perniciously altering and falsifying their mixtures to the great detriment and danger of the public; and in defiance of prohibitions the chandlers, with their stinking suet and greases, presume to sell spices, the quality and aroma whereof are incompatible with the mess, filth, and stink of grease.'¹

The distinction between the man who merely sold drugs in the state in which he received them and the man who dispensed them in medicinal form was drawn clearly by an ordinance of 1484, and was emphasized in statutes of 1514: every apothecary might be a grocer, said these documents, but a grocer would not necessarily be an apothecary, even though the two were to continue to form one corporation; to be an apothecary, a man must serve a four years' apprenticeship, pass an examination, and give satisfactory proof of professional competency. In spite of all precautions, of strict regulations and frequent official inspections, the trade enjoyed an ill repute. Too many apothecaries were ignorant, and too many were dishonest, falsifying prescriptions, selling drugs which had been so long in stock as to lose their virtue, presenting accounts in which common herbs masqueraded under strange, sesquipedalian names, and making their charges so high that an apothecary's bill became a proverbial expression to indicate overcharge.

The grocer-apothecary was not exempt from competition. The mercers, a powerful corporation, casting its nets far, displayed an alarming tendency to invade his province. In corners of that province intruders were already ensconced. Chandlers and oil-men sold tallow candles, oils, and wicks; and tapers, together with a superior sort of candle for use in churches and in the houses of the well-to-do, were made and sold by the *ciriers-ciergiers* from wax and spermaceti. Chandlers, grocers, and wine merchants were all bitter rivals of the *buffetiers*, who claimed a monopoly for the retail sale of vinegar, in which the *vinaigriers* dealt wholesale.

The drink trade flourished, and yielded large profits among a population which loved to frequent the tavern on Sundays, fête days, and market-days, and was wont to seal all its bar-

¹ Cited by Levasseur, *Histoire des classes ouvrières*, vol. ii, p. 95.

gains with a drink. It drank wine, spirits, the liquors called *cervoises*, which were made from fermented grain, hops, and spices, and the ever-popular hippocras, an aromatic preparation of wine, sugar, cinnamon, clove, and ginger. It was also beginning to drink beer. The grocer-apothecary distilled spirits and prepared hippocras; the *brasseurs-cervoisi*ers made beer and *cervoise*. The wholesale trade in wines was in the hands of a special class of merchant, who acted both as intermediaries between producers and retailers and as administrative agents to control the trade and collect the enormous sums which it bore in taxation. The retail trade was in the hands of the keepers of hotels, taverns, and inns.

In the building and furnishing trades there was considerable activity, their prosperity being assured by the taste of the Kings for building and by the effects of a Royal example sedulously followed by seigneurs, ecclesiastical dignitaries, rich merchants, and all who could afford the luxury of imitation. Nor was it only Kings and their imitators who contributed to this liveliness, for in a time of peace and prosperity following upon a long succession of lean years there was a notable activity in construction and reconstruction, and all over the country lesser men set to work to repair the ravages of the wars and of time; country gentlemen restored their manor-houses, churchwardens looked to their roofs and steeples, burghers modernized their dwelling-houses, and farmers repaired their sheds and barns. The building and furnishing trades were therefore borne forward on the crest of a wave.

The status of the medieval mason differed from that of the manual labourer who now bears the name, for not only were architects, contractors, and masons included under one designation, but also, the role of the contractor remaining unfilled, it was under the direction of masons acting as works foremen that all buildings, including the great monuments of the age, were reared. From the fifteenth century there was discernible a tendency to distinguish between the mere workman and the architect or the engineer; and the sixteenth century was alive to the difference between the man who brought to the raising of a building the contribution of his thought and taste and skill and the man who brought to it

nothing but the ability to perform a manual task; yet even then the architect, the contractor, the clerk of the works, and the mere workman still stood on a footing of apparent equality on the membership-roll of the same trade organization. In the matter of building materials the trade was governed by the problem of transport, for the materials, being bulky and heavy, were difficult and costly to move, and though a Royal builder or a Cathedral Chapter might indulge in the luxury of Caen stone or Languedoc marble, in the ordinary way the architect had to content himself with materials of local provenance. In these circumstances brick-fields and quarries were numerous, sandstone, limestone, and slate being worked wherever they were found, and every suitable deposit of clay being used in the making of tiles and of the bricks which the age rather quaintly called 'wall-tiles'. In most constructional work the question of cost governed the choice of the materials to be employed, and timber and thatch were extensively used, though occasionally thatch was forbidden on account of the danger of fire. In the slaters' guild there was a special charitable fund which discharged the function of the modern insurance fund in providing compensation for the victims of the frequent accidents to which persons employed in the trade were exposed. Nor was it only the slaters themselves who suffered by these accidents, and, when work was being done on the roofs of houses which abutted on town streets, regard had to be paid to a set of regulations framed for the protection of the passer-by. The paviour was advantaged by the fact that, from the beginning of the fifteenth century till the beginning of the seventeenth, municipal authorities required in the interests of public safety and public health that every householder should make up the road in front of his dwelling. It was prescribed—but rather as a counsel of perfection than as a rule to be enforced—that road surfaces should be perfectly even and cambered to carry off water without inconvenience to pedestrian and vehicular traffic. In the capital the paviours were an ancient corporation, long subject to special control because of the public importance of their work, though they did not receive any grant of statutes till 1502. They were not beloved of the burghers, for they were few in number and jealous of their privileges; and until, in 1538, the Parle-

ment abolished their monopoly by a decree which conferred upon the householder a welcome liberty of choice, they would permit no one but a master of their craft to be employed upon the work of street maintenance.

A strict control was exercised over the trade in timber, an essential commodity of vital consequence to the well-being of the community. Brought in by peasants and dealers on pack-animals or in ox-wagons, it might not be sold until legal requirements had been complied with: its provenance must be established, lest it should be the product of illicit felling; it must be seasoned; and it must be true measure. Precautions were also taken against a monopolistic enhancement of price: it must be sold in the public markets; it might not be hoarded; and in times of scarcity it might be subjected to restrictions on export sales. Wood for fuel was sold in logs or in faggots of various sizes, secured in bundles by flexible saplings. In building, wood was handled by carpenters for the main structural work and by joiners for doors and windows and their frames, panelling, and trellis-work. In ecclesiastical architecture it was the joiners who also produced the marvellous choir-stalls, rood-screens, pulpits, altars, and balusters which form so impressive a memorial of the skill and taste of the medieval and Renaissance artificers.

Wood, as it is scarcely necessary to remark, was also the basic material of the furniture trade. Furniture was simple and sparse, and much of it was massive and strong, but not infrequently its makers revealed a high degree of artistic and technical skill. The joiners did all the joinery and cabinet-work, making bedsteads, dressers, coffers, and cupboards, tables, benches, and trestles, easy chairs, and stools. In houses of the better sort beds were cumbrous affairs of immense size, and were usually surmounted by testers, carried on four pillars. It was likewise the joiner who performed for his customer the last service of making the coffin in which he was to be buried. Specialists in branches of joinery turned out particular objects, the *buffetiers* making wardrobes, and tables of boxwood, brazil-wood, or cypress, often inlaid with ivory, being made by the *tabletiers*, who also turned out chess-boards and boards for other games, writing-boards, sticks, boxes, and lanterns. With the exception of lanterns,

which were made of transparent horn, most of these articles were made of ivory and rare woods. The turners, who received their first statutes in 1467, worked chiefly in beech, lime, and aspen; they dealt also in baskets and wicker cages. The makers of clothes-brushes, who in Paris received their first statutes in 1486, were also amongst those who worked in wood; their brushes were of wood covered with leather and fitted with pig's bristles, and their whisks had wooden handles with beaters of dried heather, tied tightly together. Though they did not make furniture, coopers and wheelwrights may be mentioned among the trades based upon wood. Carpenters, joiners, turners, wheelwrights, and coopers were to be found in every town and in many villages, for the work in which these trades specialized was invariably the product of local labour. Timber was also used in large quantities in the yards in which ships and small craft were built.

The building trade and the furnishing trade alike used glass, the making of which had been known for many centuries, having been practised in the ancient world. Though much decayed in France in the earlier Middle Ages, the art had never died out; Dauphiné had practised it from the fourteenth century; Normandy had made window glass since the same period; and a bottle factory had existed in the Aisne region for a still longer time. The fifteenth and sixteenth centuries witnessed a marked revival in the industry. Glass was made in Lorraine from the middle of the fifteenth century, the forest of Argonne supplying wood for fuel. At the same period the industry began to make progress in Provence under the patronage of King René, producing coloured glass on the Venetian model. This art afterwards spread to Poitou, where a workman from Murano taught the secrets of the factories in which he had been trained; and in the course of the sixteenth century the manufacture of coloured glass was begun at places in Dauphiné and in the Île-de-France, at Nevers, at Rouen, and in Paris. Venetian wares were also copied in a factory at Lyons, which is mentioned as existing in 1511, when it had been subsidized by the Municipality. In the sixteenth century the chief centres of production were Poitou, which made ordinary as well as coloured glass, Normandy and Vendôme, whose products enjoyed a considerable reputation, the Île-de-France and

Champagne, Nivernais, Burgundy, Forez, Auvergne, Languedoc, and Guyenne. Most of the factories were situated in wooded regions for convenience of fuel supplies, their consumption of wood being considerable. Probably it was because wood was essential to the factories and seigneurs owned the sources of supply that the Government, wishing to encourage the industry, had exempted it from the ordinary rule imposing the penalty of 'derogation' upon a gentleman engaging in trade, and had decreed that gentlemen might establish glass-factories without forfeiting the privileges of gentle birth. It was a common complaint against such factories, not only that they consumed enormous quantities of wood and water, but also that they emitted noxious fumes from their kilns. Workers in them suffered from ophthalmic and pulmonary diseases, and a habit of heavy drinking resulted from the conditions in which they were obliged to toil.

Window glass and objects of domestic use and ornament were the chief products of the factories. Glass mirrors were known in antiquity, and there is mention of their use in France in the thirteenth century, but, until the silvering and polishing processes were perfected in the sixteenth century, mirrors of metal, usually silver, were preferred for their superiority in reflecting power and distinctness of image. It was in a metal mirror that Anne of Brittany studied her appearance. Mirrors of glass were made in France in the sixteenth century, but the chief centres of production were in Lorraine. In ancient times, as is well known, wine was kept in skins, and, although bottles had been made in France since the thirteenth century, it was only in our period that their use became general. The copious wine production of the country ensured a future for this branch of the industry. The glazing of windows in private houses was also becoming more common, though a long time had yet to elapse before it would become universal. The use of glass in windows had long been known, but in the Middle Ages the practice was to make up the windows of numerous small pieces set in lead, and, the process being costly, most people had to content themselves with oiled paper as a cheap, if inefficient, substitute. So small was the demand for glazed windows that there were no more than two glaziers in the town of Poitiers in 1522. If the medieval craftsman did little for the comfort of

his contemporaries in their homes, he has done much for the delight of posterity in the superb stained-glass windows with which he enriched and beautified the cathedrals and public buildings of his time. The sixteenth century was to see a change in this art, the medieval window of small pieces of stained glass assembled in lead giving way to a process of painting on larger sheets of clear or faintly coloured glass. By the new process artists were enabled to produce translucent pictures of great beauty and charm, but critics affirm that the gains were dearly bought by the loss of 'the dim, religious light' which had characterized medieval craftsmanship.

The Middle Ages did not make much use of glass for domestic articles, employing in its stead earthenware, pewter, or wood. Glazed earthenware had been made in France since the time of the Gauls. Faience, or pottery glazed by a new process with oxide of tin, was introduced from Italy at the beginning of the sixteenth century, and the Italian expeditions were also to produce a taste for majolica, with which Girolamo della Robbia would decorate the *château* which he was presently to build for Francis I in the Bois de Boulogne. The popularity of faience led to its imitation in French factories, and the manufacture of pottery on Italian models was begun by foreign workmen at Lyons, Nevers, Marseilles, Rouen, and places in Poitou. A potter from Forlì had kilns near the *château* at Amboise in 1500. The first Italian potters to establish factories in Lyons settled there in 1512; and it is supposed that they made faience, since it is improbable that they would have gone to Lyons to make wares already produced by French potters plying their trade in the town. A few years later in her home near Thouars the Dame de Boisy, the talented and artistic widow of Francis I's tutor, Arthur Gouffier, began to turn out the exquisite pieces of faience which it was her habit to give as souvenirs to her relatives and friends. The introduction of faience was later to lead to the establishment of an important industry at Nevers, where marl and clay were found in proximity to the town. From the year 1530 or thereabouts Italian faiences had to meet the competition of the enamelled ware of Normandy, in which Rouen was to develop a famous trade; and at the close of Francis I's reign Bernard de Palissy discovered the

secret of making objects in all respects equal to the best productions of Italian artists.

Enamelling was an art practised more often by the metal-worker than by the potter. A vitreous substance, fusible at a fairly low temperature, and susceptible of being coloured without loss of transparency, enamel may be applied to any substance which melts only at temperatures higher than that at which fusion is produced; and thus china and glass, gold, silver, and copper, may all be employed as the basis of this form of decoration. It may be applied in various ways. In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries it was the practice completely to cover the object treated, when the enamel produced its effect, not by decorative enrichment of the object, but solely by its own colouring and brilliance. At this time the basis was a black, brown, or dark blue enamel, and ornamentation was done by the addition of figures or other designs in enamel of transparent white. Work in this style was a speciality of Limoges, and was called *émail limousin*. Limoges had produced enamels from early days, but the somewhat primitive products of its original art fell into disfavour as taste grew more refined, and it was to save its industry from ruin that the place began to experiment with the translucid enamels which were destined to win an undying fame. The first products were devotional objects on copper, and the first producers included Léonard and Jean Pénicaut, who made use of opaque or translucid enamels of different colours, and substituted work of artistic merit for the crude and garish output of early enamellers. Léonard may be said to belong to the reign of Louis XII, during which some of his best work was produced. Before Francis I had been long on the throne, a new fashion was introduced of working in grisaille, and this process, being much simpler and easier, gave an opportunity for more artistic, if less showy, results. A fairly thick layer of black, brown, or blue enamel was applied to a copper base; a thin layer of transparent white enamel was then superimposed; the design was next sketched in and superfluous white enamel was removed, leaving a grey silhouette sharply defined on a dark background; and, finally, the silhouette was filled in with ornament in opaque white enamel and in gold, in the use of which the artists and craftsmen of the time were very

skilful. The most famous worker in this field was Léonard Limosin, the son of an innkeeper, who not only employed existing processes with the best effect, but also made highly successful use of a wholly new process, of which in all probability he was himself the inventor. Born in 1505 and living till 1576, he did his best work after Francis I's time.

The apparatus of enamel-production in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries differed from that in use to-day, the chief point of dissimilarity being in the fuel. In place of coke the craftsman of those days employed a charcoal made from oak. The objection to it was that it burned rapidly, necessitating frequent stoking; but it had the merit of giving a bright and clear fire, which helped the glazing-process, and imparted purity to the enamels by rapidity of fusion. Working with clay rotted down in cellars and then baked in the furnace, the potter was a much less desirable neighbour; there were many complaints that the foul stench from his kilns made adjoining houses uninhabitable; and in many towns potters were forbidden to ply their trade within the walls. In Paris there was an order, dating from 1497, that they should not operate furnaces in the neighbourhood of dwelling-houses. The capital had never done much in the way of production, its pottery business consisting for the most part of the sale of wares imported from other towns.

We turn now to a consideration of leather and furs, and it must be noted at the outset, as a curious fact of some economic consequence, that a more general distribution of wealth, which in our own day has popularized the use of, and stimulated the demand for, these materials, was productive of a precisely opposite result at the beginning of the sixteenth century. In the Middle Ages, when cloth was expensive and silk and cotton were luxuries scarcely to be obtained, furs were much used by all classes alike for clothing and for other purposes, such as bedspreads, coverlets, and foot-muffs; the number of heraldic colours which took their names from them indicates their prevalence; and so general was their use that the linen vestment with which the priest covered his ordinary dress at service time was known as an 'over-fur', a *super pelles* or surplice. Skins of all sorts were used—lamb, sheep, cat,

fox, rabbit, hare, squirrel, weasel, ermine, marten, sable, polecat, dormouse, beaver, otter, dog, badger, wolf, deer, goat, and kid. Ermine was much sought after by the rich, and cat, being cheap, was popular with the poor. Beaver was used only for hats, and cony chiefly for bed-covers. Gloves were lined with marten, minever, cat, dog, fox, wolf-cub, hare, and chamois. The grey squirrel of the North supplied the fur which, when only the backs were used, was known as *vair*, and, when the backs were alternated with the fur of the belly, was called *menu-vair* or minever; and it is through an ignorant confusion between *vair* and *verre* that we find the heroine of a well-known fairy-story inappropriately shod with a slipper of glass. After the fourteenth century furs were largely replaced by wool and silk, which began to be sold at prices which the public could afford to pay, and from that time the wearing of furs tended to become a distinguishing mark of wealth.

In this industry there were two distinct provinces: the tanners, curriers, and tawers prepared raw materials for use; their products formed the stock-in-trade of the cordwainer, the shoemaker, the cobbler, the glover, the purse-maker, the sheath-maker, the maker of belts and baldrics, the maker of trunks and caskets, the saddler, and the farrier. The cordwainers owed their name to the fact that the best shoe leather, made from goatskin treated by a secret process brought to Spain by the Moors, had been supplied exclusively by Cordova, and the name Cordovan, corrupted into cordwain, had become the trade term for all leather of the same sort. Another special leather was known as basan or bazan; in early days it had perhaps been made of calf, but later it was a special form of sheepskin; it was inferior to cordwain, with which it might not, therefore, be mixed. Leather as good as the product of Spain was made in Toulouse, Montpellier, Marseilles, Limoges, and other towns of southern France.

The method of treatment of leather depended upon the sort of hide to be dealt with: ox, cow, and calf hides were tanned by immersion in a decoction of oak bark; the skins of deer, sheep, and horses were tawed by soaking in a solution of alum and salt. A numerous and important industrial group, the tanners had achieved guild organization in most centres

of any note. They enjoyed a monopoly for the preparation of hides of ox, cow, and calf, and they were entitled also to participate in the preparation of goat and sheep skins. Water being essential to their operations, they were usually established on the banks of rivers. Their work completed, they passed the skins to the curriers, whose task was to render the leather supple with grease, tallow, and oil. Skins which had been treated, not by tanning, but by soaking in alum and salt, were given to the tawers to be softened with warm water and yolk of egg. The tawers also treated certain furs, and prepared parchment and vellum. To the time of Francis I is to be assigned the discovery of a process which produced leather of the kind known as chamois. The tradition which attributes this invention to the tanners of Poitou may well be true, for French tanners were then the best in Europe, and the tanners of Poitou stood at their head. Dealings in tanning-materials, hides, and leather were strictly regulated, to prevent corners, shortage of supplies, and artificial raising of prices; and the usual precautions were taken to ensure honest work on sound materials.

From the yards in which it was prepared leather passed to the workshops in which it was fashioned into articles of utility and ornament. The cordwainers were occupied in the production of goods for which leather of the Spanish sort was employed; the goods included saddlery and belts; but their chief products were boots, shoes, and slippers. Their position in the trade was a leading one, and they exercised a general control over the whole industry. In earlier days the cordwainers of Paris had been subject to the common rule that work must be done only in daylight hours, but Louis XI had exempted them from it upon their representation that without permission to work by artificial light they were unable on the one hand to earn a living and on the other to meet the public demand for their goods. In spite of this concession they continued to pursue with unabated ardour their ancient vendetta against the guild of cobblers, one branch of which competed with them by making a rather low-grade quality of boot and shoe, whilst the other carried out repairs. The glove-makers turned out the leather gloves worn by those in comfortable circumstances. These gloves were made of the skins of calf or deer, and were lined with

lamb's wool or fox or cony. Louis XI had given permission to work from five in the morning till ten at night, hours of toil by no means uncommon in an age to which a demand for an eight-hour day would have seemed to be an absurdity. As with the cordwainers, night work had originally been forbidden in their trade, but they had represented that in winter, when demand was most lively, hours of work were shortest, whereby they suffered serious loss, to say nothing of the demoralization of their workmen and apprentices by the opportunities which such hours gave for excessive indulgence in games and play. In Paris the makers of belts, a fashionable article of attire, were amalgamated with the baldric-makers in 1493. From the belt of cordwain or basan, embroidered with silk or thread of gold or silver, was suspended the purse or wallet, in which were carried money, seals, papers, devotional books, and toilet articles; there also hung from it a bunch of keys, a mirror, a needle-case, and a knife. It was open to a woman to set up in this trade, but the results were not satisfactory, since it became by no means uncommon for a girl to set up in business, live with a lover masquerading as an apprentice, and in the end be driven back to the paternal roof 'with less in her pocket and more on her conscience'. In the manufacture of saddlery and harness various branches specialized in different operations: the *chapeusiers* made wooden frames; the *blasonniers* fitted them up; the *selliers* added the felt and padding; the *peintres* adorned them with gold and colours; the *lormiers* supplied bridles, bits, and curbs; and another branch made harness for draught horses. Saddles were made in various styles: there were saddles in varnished wood, white saddles with pewter studs for churchmen, velvet saddles enriched with gilt studs, silk, and embroidery. The saddlers also made leggings for horsemen, and supplied upholstery for carriages. A special branch made baggage coffers in wood or wicker, covering them with leather, binding them with iron, and lining them with material; and for these a good demand was assured by the restlessness of the rich, who were constantly moving from place to place with clothes, jewellery, documents, and articles of furniture and of domestic utility. An ancient trade, that of the *paumiers*, made rackets and balls for the *jeu de paume*, as men then called 'the goodly and healthy game' of tennis,

the bat being bound with leather and covered with parchment, and the ball being of leather and stuffed.

The metal industries of France had been unable to withstand foreign competition in the Middle Ages, when the bulk of their raw material had to be imported; but at the beginning of the sixteenth century they were on the road to better things. Their progress resulted in part from the mining development which was increasing the supply and reducing the cost of home-produced metals, and in part was brought about by general prosperity and an increased spending power in the people. It was about this time that pots and pans of copper and tin began to come into general use, and that the well-to-do classes, who despised the earthenware vessels of the peasant and could not yet procure china and porcelain, sought to equip their tables with gold plate, silver plate, and pewter. Armourers, smiths, locksmiths, cutlers, makers of tools, of pins and buttons, and of cheap jewellery all benefited by economic conditions which improved the spending power of almost every class. Workers in precious metals were, perhaps, affected more deeply than any others by the increase in wealth and the reign of ostentatious fashions. A passion for gold and silver seized upon the great seigneurs, and from them spread downwards to the wealthy financiers, lawyers, and merchants who were ever prone to ape the manners of the great. All of them bought plate for their tables, ornaments for their houses, adornments for their persons, and precious gifts for the churches in which they worshipped; never had there been such sales of plates and bowls and cups, of ewers, sweet-boxes, and trinket-caskets, of belts and clasps and buckles, of Communion plate, reliquaries, statuettes, and other devotional objects in gold, silver, and precious stones. When a city wished to honour a Royal visitor or had occasion to curry favour with a grandee, the municipality turned to the goldsmiths with orders for gold cups, silver-gilt vases, silver models of ships and fountains, and services of silver plate. Taking the tide at the flood, goldsmiths and jewellers opened shops everywhere; the demand for metals became so great as to outrun the limited supplies; and through apprehensions of a currency shortage Louis XII was obliged in 1506 to impose restrictions upon

the manufacture of gold and silver plate. The heavy buying did not arise wholly from luxurious tastes and a desire for display, for, when sound investments were scarce, plate became desirable as a form of personal property which could be quickly realized, easily moved, securely stored, and in case of necessity readily concealed.

Of those who worked in base metals the armourers were the most important; they benefited, as did contemporary goldsmiths, by the splendid tastes of a luxurious age, and also, as do modern armament firms, by political unrest and international rivalries. The State was constrained to increase its stock of guns and fire-arms; the gentleman demanded a defensive covering at once more efficient and more rich; there was also a demand for the *brigandine*, the less costly accoutrement of the militia organized by Charles VII and Louis XI. In the sixteenth century there were in Paris no less than sixty masters employed in the manufacture of defensive armour, and their reputation stood very high. French armourers, however, had always been confronted by severe competition from Italian and German practitioners of their art; and the time was moreover at hand when their products would be displaced by the development of fire-arms. The prosperity of this craft, though temporarily considerable, was therefore of a fleeting nature.

A great advance in the efficacy of offensive weapons had resulted from the discovery of gunpowder and from improvements in the treatment of metals. Bows and cross-bows retained their popularity with yokels, apprentices, and youthful artisans, who delighted to display their prowess in the friendly rivalry of the playing-field; but in the sterner contention of the field of battle the weapons of the medieval footman could no longer hold their own against arquebus and pistol, supported by pike, halberd, and lance. In the main, guns and small arms were the product of private enterprise, supplies being maintained by requiring that each town should provide its quota; but the trade was one in which the State had a vital interest, and more than a century had elapsed since a Grand Maître de l'Artillerie, at the head of a numerous subordinate personnel, had been invested with control of arsenals and cannon foundries and charged with responsibility for the supply of guns. Francis I would add to his powers

a monopolistic control of saltpetre, the raw material of gunpowder, in which France was rich.

The sword was an aristocratic weapon, and workmen in this trade, having occasion in the course of their employment to wait upon seigneurs, were expected to be neatly dressed. The sword now received more embellishment, but remained in essentials much what it always had been. It was the product, not of one hand, but of three, the blade, the hilt, and the sheath coming from different workshops. The blade was usually of foreign manufacture, and came from Germany, Spain, or Franche-Comté, but a passable article was forged at Saint-Étienne-en-Forez. Knives and daggers, which could be objects either of utility or of luxury, were often given as presents, their ornament varying according to the quality of the recipient. An expensive article would have a handle and mounts in gold or silver, enamelled and chased, and Renaissance fashions produced a high standard of specialized work in gilding and damascening. Common knives were fitted with handles of olive, box, or beech. Cutlery of the highest class was made at Paris, Moulins, Châtellerault, Cosne, and Langres. Besides swords, daggers, and knives, cutlers made lances, javelins, halberds, razors and scissors, shears and bill-hooks, and scientific and surgical instruments. The large scissors used for cutting cloth were made, not by ordinary cutlers, but by a separate corporation, which specialized in the manufacture of shears. The ironmongery of Champagne, Auvergne, and Forez, the nails of Normandy, and the locksmiths' work of many French districts were as good as the cutlery, and, like the cutlery, were equalled only by the products of Germany. The age had to its credit the discovery of tin-plating, and France lost no time in applying the new process, to the advantage of kitchen utensils and other domestic articles. Hardware and edge-tools both came from the workshops of the *taillandiers-ferblantiers*, who made kitchen utensils, grates, andirons and tongs, plates and ewers, lanterns and weathercocks, hatchets, bill-hooks, axes, sickles and scythes, hoes and spades, hammers, saws, gimlets, augers, drills, braces, chisels, and pincers. In the statutes granted to them in Paris in 1463 special precautions were taken to ensure sound workmanship, because it was with their products that other workmen earned their living; each master had to

put his mark on the tools he offered for sale, and youths aspiring to learn the trade were compelled to serve an apprenticeship of six years. Ironmongers and tinsmiths suffered from the competition of the mercers, who dealt in the same goods, and of the street hawkers and itinerant tinkers, who peddled them in town and country. From the makers of pins came also clasps, brooches, and fastenings. Nails were made for carpentry, for hanging tapestry, for affixing horse-shoes, and for securing slates. The blacksmith, who shod the horse, also 'vetted' it, and repaired the implements in use on the land; such was his importance to agriculture that no district could get on without him, and every village had its forge. The medieval plumber did not find that his services were in much demand for providing water-supplies or sanitation, but he played a part, and that an important one, in making roofs watertight and serviceable with lead flats, ridge pieces, gable-ends, and sky-lights, and in the sixteenth century he shared in the prosperity of the building trade, to which he belonged. He had to satisfy himself that the lead he used was of good quality, and, if it turned out to be bad, he was made to pay a fine and to do the work over again at his own expense. He had also to be sure that lead supplied to him was honestly come by, since thefts of lead from roofs and fountains were common enough to necessitate a strict control of the trade. Another trade most rigorously controlled, because of the perils of dishonesty or negligence, was that of the locksmith. It comprised two branches: there were the humble artisans, who made locks for boxes, coffers, and trunks, and there were the workmen who remained mere workmen when making locks for doors, but became artists of astonishing excellence when producing the screens, gates, and other masterpieces in wrought iron with which they adorned cathedrals, guildhalls, and castles. To the metal trades also belonged the making of mirrors, the more costly being made of silver by the goldsmiths, and the cheaper kinds being made of pewter or steel by a guild which also produced toilet knick-knacks and trinkets.

In the trades which employed the precious metals the work of French goldsmiths, silversmiths, and jewellers had attained to a high standard in purity of design and delicacy of execution; and Benvenuto Cellini, despite strong temptations

to disparage it, would presently be constrained to confess that he had found in France a degree of perfection which could be met with nowhere else. The products of the trade were gold and silver plate, including bowls, ewers, dishes, and coffers; church furniture, including shrines, reliquaries, crosses, and rosaries; and jewellery, including rings and ear-rings, chains, bracelets, collars, and girdles of gold and precious stones, buttons of gold and enamel, and the small mirrors which were worn suspended from the belt or from a chain round the neck like locketts. The trade was subjected to special regulations necessitated by the shortage of precious metals, and its practitioners were amenable to the jurisdiction of the *Cour des Monnaies*, whose officials inspected them for the quality of their gold. All their products had to bear the maker's mark and the corporation's sign.

Below the goldsmiths various trades employed the precious metals as their sole or chief raw material. Gold leaf and gold thread were made by the *batteurs d'or* and the *tireurs d'or* for the behoof of those who used these products in decoration, illumination, and embroidery. The *doreurs sur métaux* flourished exceedingly when fashion popularized armour gilded and damascened, but they were involved in frequent disputes with the cutlers, who claimed the right to gild the blades of swords and daggers. The *doreurs sur cuir* adorned toilet articles and objects for the house; not all of these articles were in leather, for they included fans, mirrors, and clock-cases as well as boxes, powder-boxes, and fancy goods. The goldsmiths made pins and bodkins and buttons of gold and silver, and made and repaired clocks. There were several sorts of engravers. Some worked on precious stones; these were a branch of the goldsmiths; and besides cutting gems they engraved cups and vases of rock crystal or of plain or coloured glass. Some worked on coins and medals. Some were etchers and gravers on copper and steel. Some, who went with the cutlers, were chasers of iron. A small guild was busied in the production of seals and stamps. Of the rosaries, which were much in vogue as aids to devotion, as ornaments, and as presents, only the most costly came from the goldsmiths' shops; and *patenôtriers* made simpler sorts in bone and horn, in coral and shell, and in amber and jade. The *imagiers-tailleurs* and *peintres et tailleurs imagiers*

carved statues and crucifixes, and carved, gilded, and painted statues of the saints.

Goldsmiths, cutlers, ironmongers, makers of trimmings and buttons, makers of fancy goods, and several other trades were obliged to meet the formidable competition of the mercers, the wealthy and powerful corporation of merchants, who made nothing, but sold nearly everything, discharging in medieval economy the function which is performed to-day by the departmental stores. If feared by trade rivals, the mercers were greatly respected by the community at large, in whose eyes they stood for the perfect type of merchant, and in whose estimation they gained much prestige from the fact that, unlike members of the craft guilds, they never soiled their hands with manual labour. Originally their extensive commerce had comprised both wholesale and retail trade, for they had frequented the markets and the fairs, buying from domestic makers and from importers of foreign goods, and selling to the public both from the stalls which they set up there and from the shops which they opened in the towns. From the thirteenth century they began to split into two groups, and to display a cleavage between the modest retailers of haberdashery and toilet articles and the princely wholesale merchants, who formed the aristocracy of commerce. The statutes of the Parisian mercers show the magnitude of their operations and the varied character of their trade, in which textile fabrics played but a part, for they figure there as dealers in commodities from all sources, cloth and fustian from Germany, gold thread from Genoa, serges from Arras and from England, silks from Lucca, Venice, and the Levant, cutlery from Limoges and Toulouse, cloth and worsteds from Rheims and Auvergne, linens of all sorts and colours, stuffs of silk and cloth of gold, hats and belts ornamented with gold and pearls, purses and bags, costly buttons and rich braids, jewellery, ironmongery, and cutlery, needle-cases, haberdashery, and toilet requisites. They were never so rich or so prosperous as in the sixteenth century, when they profited handsomely by the progress of which they were themselves the chief promoters. Their importance from an early age is evidenced by the peculiar constitution which placed them under a special control. In each town the

merciers were subject to local laws, as were other trades; but whereas in other trades the craft guild, if it existed, stood alone as a separate and independent entity, in the mercery trade the town guild belonged to, and profited by the power and influence of, a greater regional association organized by districts and provinces or by groups of provinces. Each association had a head, known as the Roi des Merciers, who with the aid of his lieutenants defended the interests of the association, held courts for settling disputes and punishing merciers offending against the regulations, approved contracts of apprenticeship, issued letters of admission to new masters, controlled weights and measures, and supervised the quality of goods. In Paris the Roi des Merciers was appointed by the Grand Chambrier; in the provinces he was elected by the local association.

No inconsiderable part in medieval trade was played by the *fripier* or old-clothes-man, who was akin to the mercer in that he produced nothing but contributed to the well-being of the community by helping to adjust supply and demand, and who, if much inferior to that distinguished merchant, yet occupied a place greatly superior to that which he now fills in a world that has learnt to despise his useful calling. In every branch of medieval trade dealings in old or damaged goods, repaired and refurbished, were complementary to sales of goods newly made, and of all these dealings those in old clothes were the chief. They were practised by two sorts of old-clothes-men, of whom some conducted their business in shops, and others hawked their wares in the streets. Naturally enough, the trade was highly suspect to all the producers of the articles in which it dealt. It was controlled to some extent in the public interest. For obvious reasons the *fripier* was debarred from dealing in garments which had belonged to a leper; and, to remove temptation from his path, he was also forbidden to buy clothes found on the corpses of persons drowned or murdered.

At the beginning of the sixteenth century the book trade was being revolutionized by the recent invention of printing. Before that great discovery the trade had been circumscribed by the mechanical impossibility of multiplying copies; with the possible exception of texts used by University

students, books were necessarily scarce and dear; and the trade in them gave so poor a return to the bookseller that it was always combined with some other pursuit, which was sometimes that of a notary, but was often, and less congruously, that of an innkeeper or of a vendor of old clothes. Such a combination of pursuits was the more strange in that the bookseller was an officer of the University, and that he must have possessed some knowledge, since without it he could not adequately have supervised the manufacture of articles calling for immense pains and not a little skill in production. The bookseller, or stationer, as he was called, was in truth a publisher when he did not merely sell or hire out manuscripts, but copied them or had them copied, and thereby added to the supply of books. It was primarily as a publisher that he came under the control of the University, which inquired into his capacity and morality, and took precautions to ensure that his books should be true copies and should be sold at a reasonable price. In return, he received special privileges, notably exemption from *taille*, from liability to watch and ward, and from the taxes on wine, the last-named favour being of considerable value when he combined a trade in drinks with the trade in books. Parchment-makers, illuminators, scriveners, and binders were likewise under University control. Great persons—Charles VIII, Louis XII, and Anne of Brittany amongst them—commonly had illuminators and binders in their service, and the production by hand of beautiful books owed not a little to the stimulus of Royal patronage.

Paper and parchment were both in use, the older material having successfully survived the competition of the newer substitute, which had appeared in Europe in a past that might already be regarded as distant. Parchment was made from many kinds of skins, but sheepskin was the material most commonly employed. When calf-skin was used, the product was known as vellum. Parchment was a University monopoly, and with the proceeds of the tax which it bore the salary of the Rector was paid. Paper had long been known in the East, having been made for many centuries in China, and it had come to Europe from Arabia, being exported through Damascus. About the end of the thirteenth century the West had invented for itself the system by which paper

could be water-marked. In the century which followed, the manufacture of paper began to spread in France; in the fifteenth century it gained further ground with the erection of new mills and the conversion into paper-mills of buildings previously devoted to grinding corn; and in the sixteenth century, when demand was greatly enlarged by the advent of the printing-press, it increased still further in the Île-de-France, Normandy, Brittany, Champagne, Poitou, the Limousin, Angoumois, and Auvergne. Factories at Corbeil, Essonne, and Troyes worked for the University of Paris, and were under a special régime.

Printing is 'an invention rather divine than human', said Louis XII in an ordinance of 1513, when presses had been at work in his kingdom for upwards of forty years, and when men were beginning to descry the immensity of the influence which the new art would exert upon faith and morals and upon the intellectual development of the human race. Here for the moment we are concerned with the 'divine invention' upon a wholly prosaic plane, viewing it only in the mundane aspect of its contribution to industrial development.

The first press on modern lines is generally credited to Gutenberg, whose *Psalter* was published at Mainz in 1457. A few years later his partner, Fust, came to Paris, to extend the operations of his house; but he encountered a bitterly hostile reception at the hands of the many persons engaged in the book trade, who saw their vested interests menaced by the new discovery; and these persons made things so unpleasant for him that he was eventually obliged to flee. He had sown seed which was destined to germinate, however, for the printing-press was too big a thing to be held down by the interested clamour of a trade coterie. Two Doctors of the Sorbonne, Jean de la Pierre and Guillaume Fichet, had seen what the new process might achieve in providing students with books which should be at once accurate and inexpensive, and in 1470, having engaged three German printers, they set up a press in Jean de la Pierre's quarters in the Sorbonne. The plant was simple, consisting of a wooden press with but one kind of type, which the printers had to make for themselves; but the little establishment made up in enthusiasm for what it lacked in equipment, and, encouraged by official protection and Royal favour, it produced

twenty-three books, all in Latin, in the first three years of its existence. In the course of those years the press was moved from the Sorbonne to quarters of its own at the sign of the 'Soleil d'Or' in the Rue Saint-Jacques. Thence in 1475 was issued a Bible, the first to be printed in France.

Not for long did the 'Soleil d'Or' shine a solitary luminary upon the intellectual horizon, for in 1474 two workmen from its shops set up a rival press in the same street at the sign of the 'Chevalier au Cygne'. Soon afterwards a third press began operations with French compositors and under the direction of a Professor of the Collège de Navarre, who corrected its proofs. In 1476 the first book to be printed in French, *Les Grandes Chroniques de France*, came from the press of Pasquier Bonhomme. Five years later Jean du Pré issued the first book to be adorned with engraved illustrations incorporated in the text, and in 1488 he produced an illustrated *Book of Hours* printed in part from copper plates. Then miniature-painters were engaged to adorn the printed page with decorative borders and illuminated capitals, a sumptuous edition of the *Mer des Histoires* coming from the press of Pierre le Rouge, who after a training at Venice had moved by way of Chablis to Paris, to become Printer to the King.

From the capital the new art spread to the provinces, especially to the towns in which, as commercial centres or as seats of learning, the products of the press could command a market among cultured burghers and members of University bodies. In 1473 the first book was printed at Lyons by Guillaume Leroy, whom a rich merchant had brought from Liège and installed in his own home. The enterprising Liégeois has it to his credit that he twice forestalled the printers of the capital, first with a book in French, issued in 1476, and then again with an illustrated book, produced in 1478. Lyons speedily became an active centre, in which type-founders and wood-engravers as well as printers plied their trade, and where illustrated books of poetry and light literature, stories of chivalry, and other works of a popular character were produced for sale in its own fairs and in those of Beaucaire. Other provincial centres followed where the metropolitan cities of the north and the south led the way, and the new invention was adopted at Toulouse and Angers

in 1476, at Chablis and Vienne in 1478, at Poitiers in 1479, at Caen in 1480, at Albi in 1481, at Chartres in 1482, at Troyes in 1483, at Rennes and Loudéac in 1484, at Tréguier, Rheims, Rouen, and Tours in 1485, at Abbeville in 1486, at Embrun in 1489, at Grenoble and Orleans in 1490, at Angoulême, Dijon, and Narbonne in 1491, at Cluny in 1492, at Châlons, Mâcon, and Uzès in 1493, at Limoges, Provins, and Valence in Dauphiné in 1496, at Périgueux in 1498, and at Valenciennes in 1500. Thus within the thirty years which had elapsed since the first modest experiment of the two Professors in a cellar of the Sorbonne the map of France was dotted with places equipped to wield a weapon as tremendous as any with which invention has ever enriched the intellectual armoury of mankind.

A few towns specialized in a particular class of book, and in the University centres the output conformed to the demands of the prevailing type of literary activity. Toulouse produced works on theology, philosophy, and law. Poitiers was an active centre, containing as many as seventeen booksellers in 1522, and in that century operating a dozen presses, which competed with those of Paris and Lyons. At Rouen liturgies were printed for sale in Brittany and central France and for export to England, Flanders, and Scandinavia. Illustrated books, as good as those produced in Paris, came from the presses of Troyes. Not all of the presses were devoted entirely to the production of serious works of permanent value. Some of them followed the example of Lyons, turning out books intended to have a popular appeal; and, although there was nothing as yet in the nature of a newspaper, ephemeral work with a topical interest made its appearance with the sale in book-shops and in the streets of loose sheets which gave programmes for, or descriptions of, popular fêtes, or announced the happening of great events. Local enterprise brought out a programme for the entry of Charles VIII at Rouen in 1485, and the state entry of Louis XII into the capital in 1498 was described in an illustrated 'Relation', which ran through three editions. The tournament which took place on that occasion, and the ceremonial of Louis' coronation, were subjects dealt with in other sheets. The aid of the printing-press was also enlisted in the production of playing-cards, which had at first been painted by hand, and

afterwards had been struck from wood-engraved blocks. Long known in the East, cards had been introduced into Europe as playthings for children, and towards the end of the fourteenth century they had been adopted as a medium for adult games. They speedily became popular, supplanting dice, which were entirely a matter of chance, and chess, which only two persons could play.

Printing went on from strength to strength in the sixteenth century, as presses grew in number and technical processes improved in efficiency. The reign of Louis XII and the early years of his successor may be accounted a period of transition. During this period appeared the first manifestation of a tendency to give up the Gothic characters which at first were universally employed. Roman type was used by Josse Bade, a professor of literature, who set up in business in Paris in 1503 after an apprenticeship at Lyons and experience in Italy. The same type was then adopted by Henri Estienne, the founder of a house which was destined to raise printing to new heights of scholarship and technical skill. Robert, the erudite son of Henri, and the most illustrious member of a family of which several generations attained to distinction, was highly esteemed by Francis I, who liked to converse with him and to inspect his work; often the King would go with his sister, Margaret, to call in the Rue Jean-de-Beauvais, where Estienne worked. On one occasion he found the printer engaged upon the correction of a proof, and declared that he would sooner wait than have him disturbed in the midst of his labour. On another occasion he gave a yet more valuable indication of his interest by taking upon himself the cost of a set of Greek type specially cast for Estienne's use.

In the first half-century of its existence in France the new industry had cause to be grateful for much Royal favour and encouragement. Louis XI, Charles VIII, and Louis XII in turn had accorded privileges and extended protection to printers. Both protection and restraint were inherent in the idea of 'privilege', or permission to publish, which was granted by Parlements and Universities as well as by the Crown. It was a protection, in so far as it conferred a species of copyright, a favour accorded as a rule to the publisher of a book, not to its author. It was a restraint, in so far as it

involved the consequence that no book might be published without it, a precaution not unreasonably taken by authority to control an industry fraught with such immense possibilities for good or evil. Penalties of the utmost severity were imposed for offences against religion, morality, or the State, culprits being visited with the whip, prison, banishment, and death. When sentence of death was carried out, it was the practice to consign publisher or author to the flames along with the publications which constituted the *corpus delicti*. More commonly the condemned work, and that only, was immolated, being publicly burnt by the officers of justice.

With a few observations about sundry miscellaneous trades, which demand a passing notice, we may bring to an end our survey of French trade and industry. Over fencing-masters, dancing-masters, bird-dealers, flower-girls, and hair-dressers we need not linger long. Succeeding in a measure to the position of the medieval herald, the fencing-master made his appearance in the sixteenth century, when a desire for instruction in the use of weapons spread to the middle classes, and when dexterity in the use of them was rendered a vital matter by the introduction of duelling. If the fencing-master lacked the dignity of the herald, the dancing-master and the musician were stationed at a still greater remove from the minstrel and the troubadour of earlier days, whose function had likewise been entertainment, but whose position had been that of artists attached to the courts of kings and seigneurs. In the sixteenth century the musicians themselves made the instruments upon which they played; these included the horn, the viol, the flute, the tambourine, the harp, the sackbut, the oboe, the cornet, the spinet, and the violin. They gained experience by playing in taverns during their period of apprenticeship. When qualified, they were engaged chiefly to provide music at weddings and for feasts. The rules of the trade did not allow to the hirer any scope for individual choice; he must go to the Rue aux Jongleurs, where the musicians offered themselves for service, and must take one, much as we take a cab, from the rank. The bird market was much frequented, cage-birds being popular, and most country houses possessing an aviary. Small birds might

not be taken in the forests without a permit, and there was a close season during the time of nesting. Upon the occasion of the state entry of kings and queens the dealers were required to restore liberty to feathered captives in sign of rejoicing. The official ceremony, to which the bird-dealer thus had reason to object, was a boon to the chaplet-maker, whose garlands or coronets of roses or other flowers were much worn in processions. The chaplet-makers had been astute enough to turn a fashion to commercial account, adornment with natural blooms being common in the Middle Ages, which in times of rejoicing and on other suitable occasions had anticipated the counsel of the modern florist and elected to 'say it with flowers'. Though favoured by fashion, the trade lacked the usual privileges; chaplets were often made at home by the persons who intended to wear them, and the recognized vendors of them also encountered competition from plume-makers, gardeners, and other rivals. If no chaplet was worn for a fête or other special occasion, the plume-makers adorned the head with feathers, pearls, and gold thread, or the mercers covered it with a richly embroidered hat.

Last on our list comes the surgeon-barber. An age which in its contempt for manual labour thought fit to take its prescriptions to the grocer's shop, likewise drew a sharp distinction between medicine and surgery. In its view medicine, which was concerned with diagnosis and prescription, could justly claim to be a liberal art; but it assigned the status of a trade to surgery and midwifery, which entailed upon their practitioners the stigma of mechanical toil. Practised in early days mainly by monks and priests, medicine had since been influenced by an increase in the number of Universities and by the rise of medical schools; it tended to become laicized and to spread; and at the beginning of the sixteenth century physicians had set up in practice in all the chief towns. Their training being wholly theoretical and the knowledge and mental processes of their instructors leaving very much to be desired, practising physicians were usually both ignorant and stupid, prone to subject unhappy patients to the delusions of sciolism and to the bigotries of folly. Such as they were, however, they had the sole right to examine the sick, prescribe medicines, and advise

operations, and this monopoly they enforced with characteristic ardour against surgeons, apothecaries, and quacks.

Contemned as mere artisans, surgeons had long been classed with barbers, with the profits of whose trade they did in fact often eke out the slender emoluments of surgery, dentistry, and the care of the eyes. Dangerously ignorant, especially in the country, where they were on a level with the peasants to whom they ministered, the humbler practitioners did least harm when they contented themselves, as they usually did, with the rendering of first aid in accident or emergency. In Paris and some other towns there were surgeons worthy of the name, in whose more skilful hands the knife was beginning to reveal its destiny, not as an engine of brutal mutilation, but as an instrument of beneficent repair. For many years past the profession had possessed a theatre in the capital, where surgical demonstrations were given, and in which aspirants to proficiency might follow a regular course in practical science. In 1491 the surgeons of Paris protested to the Faculty of Medicine against the position allowed to barbers, who were permitted to combine bleedings and dressings with the care of hair and beards. The protest was disregarded, for the doctors were animated by a jealousy and greed which matched their stupidity and ignorance, and they preferred collaboration with a humble tradesman, whom they could bully, to say nothing of americing him in tutorial fees. In 1505 barbers were definitely admitted to studentship and other privileges under the Faculty of Medicine.

In addition to their activities on the threshold of surgery the barbers shaved, cut hair, trimmed beards, curled hair and wigs, and sold pomatums, powders, rouge, scents, and toilet requisites. They also kept public bathing establishments, the repute of which may be deduced from the trend and general character of the measures taken officially to control them. It was provided that baths for men might not be run by women, and in women's baths no boy might be admitted unless under the age of seven years. Neither in the one nor in the other was there to be any admittance for persons of depraved habits or ill fame. Scrupulous cleanliness and pure water were enjoined, and care was to be taken to exclude lepers and Jews. On Sundays and holy days the establishments were to remain closed.

XXXVI

ECONOMIC CONDITIONS

INDUSTRIAL ORGANIZATION: THE GUILDS.

DOMESTIC TRADE. FOREIGN TRADE

INDUSTRIAL organization is conditioned by the growth of industry and trade, which develop with the expansion of the markets upon which they are based. A primitive society may effect some exchange of goods by barter, but it knows little or nothing of trade in the sense in which that term is now understood: the unit is the village; the needs of the village are simple and few; and for the most part the constituent households supply those needs either by their own production or by exchange with their neighbours. As society progresses, towns arise, and with the rise of towns comes a broadening of the narrow basis of the commercial structure: small tradesmen begin the commercial production of commodities, and these they either sell to their neighbours or exchange for foodstuffs and raw materials brought in by the peasants of the countryside. Though there is then a widening of the geographical limits, there is not at first much broadening of the commercial outlook, each petty area continuing to cherish the ideal of self-sufficiency and to confine its trade within its own boundaries. That stage, however, in turn passes, and the horizon begins to widen, as population grows, communications improve, and wealth increases, when there arises a demand for luxuries which cannot be satisfied from local sources of supply. Markets then grow, and are stimulated by the process of growth; the basis changes from local to provincial, from provincial to national, from national to international. Such growth and such change were in progress in France in the period with which we are concerned. In the fifteenth century traders had begun to go afield in the search for markets, and 'in the course of the sixteenth century the narrow limits of the town economy were being set aside'. Towns ceased to be self-contained units and became trade rivals; country districts entered the lists as producers; and in localities in which circumstances were specially favourable, certain trades

began even to embark upon the adventure of large-scale production.¹

In the course of this development two tendencies manifested themselves. One was a division of labour, leading first to a multiplication of handicrafts, and then to the organization of the crafts in trade corporations or guilds for the purpose of protecting markets and promoting trade interests: to this we must recur presently. The other, at all events in France, was an extension of Royal control in the economic sphere. In France at the beginning of the sixteenth century the control of industry and commerce was still divided, a part belonging to the Crown and a part to the seigneur or the municipality; but the share of the Crown was increasing, and the shares of the seigneur and the municipality were growing less. Seigneurial rights were relics of the extensive powers which the lord had exercised in days when artisans and traders had been his serfs. He it was who then legislated for the trades, regulated export, controlled markets, settled conditions for the sale of goods, granted charters, and imposed penalties for breach of regulations. In the self-governing towns a similar control was exercised by the municipality, 'whose legislative, administrative, and fiscal powers were so numerous and so extensive as to realize the ideal pursued by socialist municipalities in our own day'.² In so far as the King then did these things, he did them, not as a sovereign, but as a seigneur, for in this sphere as in all others the powers which he possessed were not so much regalian as seigneurial. Side by side, however, with the increase in the general authority of the Crown, of which we have traced the growth, arose a determination to assume an overriding mastery in the economic sphere. The old tradition that local authorities should regulate local trade the King did not overtly challenge; but upon local regulation he superimposed a paramount central control. Labour questions were dealt with by ordinances of general application; commercial causes and industrial disputes were submitted to the arbitrament of the King's courts; the guilds and all that

¹ G. Unwin, *Industrial Organization in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, pp. 1-5, 71.

² Boissonnade, *Essai sur l'organisation du travail en Poitou*, Société des Antiquaires de l'Ouest, *Mémoires*, Series I, vol. xxii, p. 290.

pertained to them, including the grant of charters of incorporation and the issue, revision, and confirmation of statutes, were made subject to the Royal authority. The object of Royal policy was to ensure that the economic sphere should offer no contradiction of the legists' maxim that the will of the Prince has the force of law.

The regulation of industry and the restoration of industrial productivity, the adjustment of relations between employers and employed, the encouragement of new undertakings, the maintenance of old ones in prosperity by giving protection in the home market and securing access to markets abroad, the avoidance of monetary embarrassment by the preservation of favourable trade balances—these were objects as dear to French rulers in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries as ever they have been to the Governments of our own materially minded age. If sought as fervently, however, the objects were not usually pursued with the same persistence, for the economic policy of the time, being tentative and experimental, was apt to lack coherence and continuity. Such qualities could, indeed, scarcely have been looked for in a period of swift and bewildering economic change. Amongst the problems with which the Crown had to grapple there was one which might be regarded as possessing major importance, seeing that it went to the very roots of industrial organization. The wars had lessened the rigidity of local industry, made the commercial and industrial populations more mobile, and imparted renewed vitality to the fairs, which opposed to the parochial narrowness of the closed local market the wider horizon of inter-provincial and international trade. To this broader conception of commerce, which was diametrically opposed to their monopolistic ideal, the guilds offered a determined resistance. It seemed for a time that the resistance would be vain, for the whole trend of economic development had appeared to be in favour of trade freedom, and in the middle of the fifteenth century the close corporations had been losing ground, whilst the open trades had been increasing steadily in numbers. Soon afterwards, however, the Crown intervened, and as a consequence of its intervention the trend of events was reversed.

Called upon to choose between the opposing tendencies which were steering industry and commerce, the one towards

competition and freedom, the other towards monopoly and control, Louis XI decided to espouse the cause of the guilds. He thought that liberty had bred abuses, and believed that the corporate system would do more to maintain morality in industry and commerce, prevent abuses and frauds, and benefit both producers and consumers by providing an assured supply of trustworthy goods at a fair price. He was also alive to the political potentialities of the guilds, and saw what might follow from turning their members into his protégés and allies: the authority and influence of the Crown would be increased; centralization would be furthered; revenue would be augmented by the receipt of additional taxes, dues, and fines; and the working class would be subjected to a discipline much to be desired in the interests of the State. Accordingly he gave his support to the guilds and busied himself in granting, confirming, and revising guild statutes. Innumerable charters of incorporation were granted during his reign and during the reigns of his immediate successors. Sometimes a town whose trades had been free would find that all of them had received corporate organization at one stroke, as at Clermont, Tours, and Narbonne. Sometimes, in a town in which this form of organization existed, it was extended by the inclusion of trades previously free, as with the makers of tennis-balls and the mat-makers of Paris, the coopers and the joiners of Évreux, and the bonnet-makers of Bourges. In Paris as many as twenty trades received new or revised statutes in as many years, at Toulouse nearly forty in half a century. At Amiens the guilds, of which there had been a bare dozen in 1400, numbered over forty when the century came to an end. In other industrial centres much the same thing occurred, the guilds of Rouen increasing to sixty, and those of Coutances, small as it was, to over twenty. In most of the chief towns of the kingdom the corporate system was installed, and it gained a footing even in Lyons and some other places which were firmly wedded to the régime of freedom.

The *métier juré*, trade corporation or handicraft guild, possessed certain well-defined characteristics. It was a close body, to be entered only with certain formalities, and it was based upon a division into three classes—apprentices, paid artisans, and masters. It was governed by the masters

assembled in general meeting, and was administered by officials whom this body appointed. It had a replica of itself in a confraternity, half religious and half eleemosynary, which had a spiritual home in a parish church and acted as almoner of its own charitable fund. To be entitled to ply the guild's trade a man must be a master, and to become a master he must have served an apprenticeship, made a 'master-piece' or undergone other tests of technical proficiency, and been formally admitted to the 'mystery' upon payment of due fees and the taking of a solemn oath to observe the rules and statutes of the guild. These rules were framed with the object of affording equal protection to consumer and producer: to the consumer, by insistence upon honest dealing and the vending of sound commodities at reasonable prices, and by securing to him a right of priority in the making of purchases; to the producer, by insistence upon equality of opportunity, alike in purchasing raw materials, engaging labour, and effecting sales, and by protection against competition, whether from within by the intrusion of inadequately trained artificers or from without by the operations of producers or dealers outside the trade's local sphere of influence. In other words, the corporate system compelled a master to be honest, and in return rewarded him with participation in a corporate monopoly of a closed local market.

To ensure honest work, the quantity and quality of materials, the method of manufacture, the weight and design of the product were all prescribed, and elaborate precautions were taken to guard against fraud: work had to be done in full view of the public; it was rarely allowed to be done by night; and materials of different values, such as silk and thread, gems and coloured glass, old materials and new, might never be employed together in the production of any article. Before goods could be sold, they must receive the approval of the guild officials, who not only came by request to certify products, but who could, and did, also pay surprise visits, to see that the rules were being observed. If goods were found to be defective, the officials condemned them, whereupon the goods were destroyed and the maker of them was fined or otherwise punished, the punishment being severe where fraudulent or negligent work involved an injury to the health of consumers, as with an apothecary's

drugs or a butcher's meats. When goods were approved, they were marked, the intention being that the mark should serve as a guarantee of quality.

As a pendent to the regulations designed to ensure honest work there were complementary regulations designed to ensure that the man who turned out such work should have a reasonable certainty of earning a fair profit. No such certainty could, it was supposed, be offered by a system of unregulated competition, for in the face of such competition a producer must run the risk of being undersold or must reduce the quality of his output for the purpose of reducing his own prices. The object of the regulations was therefore to eliminate competition alike from within the guild and from without. Internally, all the members were to share equally in work and in profit. Each was to have his due proportion of the raw materials available. All must restrict their labour to specified hours. All must sell their finished articles at standard prices. To restrict numbers in the guild, no master might train more than a limited number of apprentices, for as a potential future master an apprentice was a menace to the desired limitation of the total of trade competitors, to say nothing of the fact that, being unpaid, he was also a dangerous instrument of cheap production. The kinds of goods which a man might make and sell were restricted, the ideal being that each producer should confine himself to the production of one sort, and of one only: a smith must not make a key, nor a cabinet-maker a lock; a tailor must not mend old clothes, nor an old-clothes dealer make a new garment. No master might advertise or solicit custom to the detriment of another master. He might not have more than one shop or stall; nor might he effect sales through the instrumentality of middlemen, who were much disliked as non-productive speculators, and whose function in adjusting supply to demand was not perceived. In theory he might engage as many paid workmen as he pleased, but in practice there was a tendency to ration labour as well as materials. Competition from without was restrained with a like thoroughness. If the outsider or 'foreign' producer was permitted to sell his wares at all, it was only in the public market during specified hours and after submission of the wares to the interested inspection of the officials of the local

guild. Sometimes he might not buy until local purchasers had satisfied their needs. Advance buying, or 'forestalling', was prohibited, and no one was allowed to go out and meet an incoming merchant for the purpose of bringing off a private deal. By these means a guild member was assured a fair share of such business as was to be obtained in the local market.

A beneficiary of this ingeniously contrived monopoly, the guild played such a part in the country's economic life as to demand that we should pay some attention to its organization and character. Of the three orders—apprentices, workmen, and masters—whom it is usually said to have comprised, one, the apprentices, were in strictness not so much members as candidates for membership. The relationship between master and apprentice was the subject of a formal contract or indenture of apprenticeship, and, as this contract required their approval, the guild officials had an opportunity to see that the terms were reasonable. Their responsibility was the greater in that one party to the contract was usually a child of tender years, whose career it was in the power of the other to make or mar. The basis of the indenture was instruction in a handicraft: the master undertook to teach the apprentice his trade, supplying him meanwhile with board, lodging, and clothing; the apprentice undertook to obey and respect the master, to study to please him, and to use his time and regulate his behaviour in accordance with the master's precepts. If the apprentice were guilty of vice, idleness, or unruliness, the master might administer corporal punishment. Should the apprentice run away, he could be compelled to return, and to indemnify the master for loss of service, if the absence had been short; if it were prolonged or repeated, the contract might be annulled. So long as the contract subsisted, a master might not replace a fugitive; had he been permitted to do so, he would have been exposed to the temptation of driving one apprentice away for the sake of the fees to be had of another; and it was thought, moreover, that flight was in itself a reflection upon him, since he ought to see that the apprentice had no inclination to truancy. No other master might engage a lad who had run away. Should a master die, his apprentices remained in the service of his successor. Should he retire from business, they were transferred to another master.

In nearly all corporations there was a strict limit upon the number of apprentices whom a master was permitted to engage; he was usually restricted to one or two. The object of the restriction was twofold: first, to ensure that adequate personal supervision and tuition should be given, and, secondly, to keep competition within bounds by the avoidance of an immoderate demand for the privileges of mastership. To the general rule there was, however, an important exception in favour of the sons and stepsons of a master, all of whom had a right to become members of the guild. The term served by the apprentice varied greatly with different trades, but was rarely short and not seldom was very long. Again, the object was twofold: first, to ensure technical proficiency by thorough grounding; and, secondly, to tie the pupil to his instructor for a period long enough to ensure that the waste of time and materials in early efforts might be redeemed by an adequate performance of competent work. In the *métiers jurés* of the capital, which may be taken as a guide to conditions in the country as a whole, apprenticeship periods varied from two years to twelve. In two trades, curriers of leather and makers of *chausses*, it was for two years only; it was for three years in eighteen trades; it was for four years in twenty-one trades; in sixteen trades the apprentice was indentured for five years; he was bound to six years' service in twenty-three trades; he served for seven years when apprenticed to a sword-maker, a nailer, or a lapidary; and he had to serve for eight years with a goldsmith, a saddler, or a baggage-maker. In the furriery trade there was an exceptional arrangement, by which the candidate for admission to mastership was required to put in four years' service as a workman after serving a four years' apprenticeship. With the makers of paternosters or rosaries the period of apprenticeship varied with the materials of which the beads were made: if they were of bone or horn, it was for eight years; if of amber or jade, it was for ten years; and it was for no less than twelve years, if the work was done upon coral or mother-of-pearl. The duration of apprenticeship does not seem to have been fixed upon any obvious principle. It had little or no relation to the difficulty of learning the trade. That it was designed, as has been suggested, to restrict competition in popular

trades is difficult to believe, for pressure to get into them cannot have been a constant factor, and had the supply of masters in fact been regulated by the duration of apprenticeship, there would soon have been a dearth of rosary-makers and an embarrassing glut of curriers, bakers, fullers, drapers, and tailors, whose apprenticeship period was short. In unincorporated trades apprenticeship was governed by a mere contract with no express sanctions; the terms and the period were not settled by any rules; and, since there was no limit to the numbers of those who might ply the trade, there was a corresponding absence of limit to the number of apprentices. The position of the apprentice in these trades was wholly different and much less enviable. In the *métiers jurés* he might, no doubt, find himself bound to an incompetent, avaricious, or brutal master, but, if so, he would have deemed himself unlucky, for the general rule was a pleasant participation in a happy family life. In the *métiers libres* he can rarely have been anything but miserable, for, the numbers being unlimited, he was one of a gang, doing a workman's job, doing it without pay, and doing it in an atmosphere of rivalry, jealousy, and hatred.

His period of service completed, the apprentice had originally been entitled to claim admission to the 'mystery'. The son of a master might be in a position immediately to exercise his right, but as a rule the discharged apprentice could meet the heavy cost of admission only by accumulating funds during a period of salaried service as a journeyman. The journeyman in search of work was obliged to repair in the morning to a specified spot, there to wait for a master to come and engage him. Not permitted to go away until a bell gave the signal for departure, he was condemned to a long wait in the open air, unless he could arrange some rendezvous more comfortable than the public street. At Chartres in the sixteenth century the mechanics and labourers offering themselves for hire took up their station in the Cathedral, where they walked about with their hods, hoes, picks, and other tools, waiting for a master to come and engage them. That the noble church should be used as a Labour Exchange did not seem strange to a generation accustomed to the presence there of dealers in mercery, food-stuffs, and fruit, hawking their wares, and to the passage of

housewives, taking short cuts to market with shopping-baskets on their arms.¹ As in domestic service to-day, the contract of service was usually a verbal one, and its terms were a matter for negotiation between master and man. The engagement was sometimes for a specified piece of work, but was more generally for a period of time, whether a day, a week, a month, or a year. Under long-term contracts the workman usually lived with his employer, and took part of his remuneration in the shape of lodging and board. Once engaged, a workman must fulfil his contract; he could not terminate it by notice and go to another job. Nor could the master dismiss him, unless it were for a cause adjudged sufficient by the officials of the guild. The hours worked were long, for they ran from sunrise to sunset, with breaks for meals amounting to two hours or less in all. To set against this, holidays were frequent; indeed, their number was excessive from the point of view of the short-term or piece-work wage-earners, whom they condemned incessantly to unprofitable idleness. No work was done on Sundays or on any of the numerous feast-days of the Church; on Saturdays and on the eves of feasts work stopped early; and there were suspensions for adverse weather conditions, for masters' funerals, and for other causes. In practice a workman was allowed to engage himself to a private employer for short and casual jobs, but in principle he could hire himself to none but a master. In no circumstances might he infringe the master's monopoly by working on his own account in his own quarters, and fines and imprisonment awaited the workman detected in the commission of this offence. So great was the jealousy of the guilds that objection was even taken by them to work done with a philanthropic intent, as, for example, at Amiens, where Sisters of Mercy were restrained from making goods which they meant to sell for the benefit of their sick and needy fund. And yet, despite all precautions, there was a steady output of clandestine work, which was usually disposed of surreptitiously in hole-and-corner deals, but sometimes in blatant defiance was hawked about the streets. In their campaign against this traffic the guild officials were in the difficulty that the pirate

¹ Aclocque, *Les Corporations, l'industrie et le commerce à Chartres du XI^e siècle à la Révolution*, p. 34.

workman had the support of public opinion, which was always hostile to guild monopoly and favourable to every infringement that offered a hope of lower prices.

In the matter of admission to mastership there was a profound difference between the *métier libre* and the *métier juré*. In the former all that a workman need do was to give proof of his respectability and technical proficiency, when the municipality would give him leave to open a shop. In the latter the formalities of admission were long and costly. The candidate must show that he had duly served the requisite apprenticeship. He must demonstrate his proficiency either in an examination at the hands of the guild officials or by the production of a *chef-d'œuvre* or 'master-piece', of whose quality they were the judges. He must make various payments, amounting together to a total severely taxing the resources of an artisan's purse: to the King or one of his Great Officers; to the guild officials; to the common purse of the guild *confrérie*; to defray the cost of the banquet which he must give to the masters and of the gifts which he must offer to the guild officials. All these were hindrances to the aspirations of an ambitious artisan, and especially the requirement that he should submit a 'master-piece', which was enforced with increasing severity as the monopolistic tendencies of the guilds grew and the desire to restrain competition increased. The nature of the 'master-piece' varied in different trades, but in many its production involved a long and costly effort with much outlay upon tools and materials and much loss by interference with salaried work, so that by the time it was finished its producer had usually consumed his savings and perhaps saddled himself with debts as well. Moreover, as the test increased in severity for the ordinary artisan, it became more and more a mere formality for the son of a master, who could count upon the indulgence of his father's cronies to wink at irregularities and pass indifferent work. Another injury was done to the artisan in the right which the Crown was beginning to arrogate to itself to grant admissions to mastership without proof of professional capacity and to authorize its nominees to grant them. An instance may be found in letters patent of 1514, empowering Francis of Valois to create one master in each trade in every city of the kingdom. Under the pressure of fiscal stringency

such creations became increasingly numerous as the sixteenth century went on. Another innovation had been introduced in Charles VIII's time with the creation of a privileged class under the name of '*marchands suivant la Cour*', who had the rights of masters but not the liabilities.

In many trades women were admitted to guild membership on equal terms with men, and in nearly all a widow was permitted to carry on her dead husband's business. In some trades there were none but women, there being no male competition for sempstresses, ribbon-makers, bonnet trimmers, and embroiderers. Certain of the processes of silk manufacture also were performed exclusively by female hands, and in some towns certain processes in the making of cloth. In a few trades, but not in many, women were eligible to qualify as officers managing guild affairs.

The trade corporation was a legal entity. It could own property, enter into contracts, and engage in litigation. It had a budget, its revenue being derived from dues paid by apprentices and masters on admission, from subscriptions, from devises and bequests, from fines and rents, and its expenditure consisting of the dues which it fell to the corporation to pay, the cost of upkeep of property, the cost of feasts, fêtes, and public solemnities, together with its religious and charitable outlay upon chaplains and masses, upon the funerals of guild members, and upon pecuniary relief of the aged and the sick. Lawsuits might be between corporations, or between masters within a corporation, or between master and man. They were numerous, for the spirit of the age was litigious, jealousy between trades was acute, and there was great difficulty in delimiting their respective spheres with precision. In the harness trade there were incessant quarrels between the saddlers, the makers of harness for draught animals, and the lorimers, who made bits, bridles, and other trappings. The makers of breeches objected when the fripperers bought second-hand breeches, folded and pressed them, and sold them in a condition apparently equal to new; only new breeches, they said, might be offered folded and pressed; old ones should be exposed for sale hanging on a nail. The dyers resented it when the weavers dyed, the weavers when the dyers wove. The shoemakers objected when the cobblers made new shoes, and the cobblers com-

plained when the shoemakers repaired old ones. The locksmiths disputed the right of the cabinet-makers to fit fastenings to furniture. All the trades were up in arms against the hawkers, who filled the streets with their barrows and filched business from the owners of shops.

Supreme power in the corporation belonged to the *maîtres du métier*, who sometimes were Great Officers of the Crown and sometimes were private individuals. As their interest in the corporation's affairs was generally limited to the exaction of their dues, the effective chiefs were the officials of the craft, called variously *jurés*, *gardes*, *élus*, *prud'hommes*, *syndics*, and *consuls*. In some cases these officials were elected by the corporation; in some they were chosen by the Prévôt of Paris or a Great Officer, or were nominated by him on the corporation's recommendation; in some they were co-opted by the officials vacating office. They usually held office for a year, their chief duties being the protection of apprentices, the examination of candidates for admission to the 'mystery', the admission of such as were successful, the control of manufacture and sale, including the paying of domiciliary visits of inspection, the collection of dues and fines, the supervision of accounts, and the conduct of meetings. The guild met periodically to elect officers and pass accounts, and it met at irregular intervals to consider such matters as the sale of property, the initiation of litigation, and the amendment of guild statutes. Such meetings it was the duty of masters to attend, and all who absented themselves without valid excuse were liable to a penalty.

Having come into existence in the Middle Ages, when the basis of life was religious, the corporation, mundane and material, had felt it necessary to repeat itself in another organization, founded upon religion and charity. Identical in composition, the *confrérie* was a counterpart of the guild, and united in the bonds of a common fellowship all the persons employed in a trade. Each *confrérie* had its patron saint, whose feast-day was kept with great pomp in the special chapel of the fraternity; and here were also celebrated masses for dead members, marriages, baptisms, and funerals. The superb stained glass of Chartres is one evidence among many of the debt which churches owed to the munificence of the trade fraternities which worshipped in them. The sick, the

needy, the aged, the unfortunate in the trade ranks were assisted out of the common fund, which was replenished by donations and subscriptions, special collections, legacies, and rents. At periodical intervals the members met together to feast at a common table; and although there was a risk that these feasts might lead to the squandering of community funds in orgiastic dissipation, it was nevertheless true that the *confrérie* owed a part of its vitality to the prevailing taste for good cheer and display. Economically it was an objection to the activities of the fraternities that output, already suffering much interruption by the observance of the many feast-days of the Church, was curtailed still further by the many occasions on which work was stopped for the purpose of celebrating some event in the family life of a *confrère*.

The relations between masters and men were beginning to suffer a change at the opening of the sixteenth century. In earlier days, when the master had worked side by side with the man, earning no more and living no better, simplicity of life had maintained good feeling. Moreover, a modest capital had then sufficed to keep a shop, and the man had been content in the knowledge that by thrift and industry he in his turn could gain access to the employing class. This state of affairs suffered a change for the worse, as admission to mastership became increasingly difficult. The difficulties arose in part from a change in economic conditions and in part from a change in the spirit and character of the guilds. As a result of the general trend of business development produced by an improvement in communications and other factors, competition was constantly increasing in severity, and the old ideal of a closed local market, upon which guild organization was based, became more and more difficult to maintain. As trade expanded, production was undertaken on a larger scale, and the modest capital which had sufficed to set up a master in simpler days became inadequate to a wider need. In some of them, as we have seen, the basis of organization was growing definitely capitalistic, and such a basis left small chance for the industrious artisan to pass from the employed to the employing class. In the trades in which that chance was permitted by economic factors to survive, it was being steadily lessened by the spirit of exclusion which

was invading the guilds. No longer might the qualified apprentice hope to proceed direct to ownership of his own shop; he had to put in a further term of service as a workman, and found the path of advancement closed against him by a 'barricade of privileges'.¹ With the mastership made inaccessible to the ordinary workman, the corporations were becoming the preserves of small hereditary castes, and a spirit of class antagonism was ousting the happy family feeling of earlier days.

An economic impulse underlay the movement for restricting corporation membership to a small privileged class; it was the desire to widen the margin between cost price and sale price and to augment the profits of producers. It was believed that this could best be done by keeping down wages, and that the obvious way to keep down wages was to restrict access to mastership and thereby to lessen the competitive demand for labour. The consequence was to make wage disputes a feature of industrial life, such disputes occurring with increasing frequency as the purchasing power of the money paid to workmen became affected by the continuous rise in prices which accompanied the monetary revolution of the sixteenth century. When the State was compelled to intervene, it did so on the side of the employers, seeking to establish a maximum wage. Its sympathies were with the respectable, substantial, and fiscally productive employer and against the socially undesirable and fiscally unproductive artisan, who was despised when he was not feared. 'Masters and men were instruments in the performance of a common task—the stimulation of production and the increase of wealth. . . . In the common effort the aspirations of the industrial *bourgeoisie* were heeded in preference to those of the working class. In favouring the *bourgeoisie*—and the tendency to favour them was inveterate—the Crown was caring for those who were docile supporters of its authority and the principal authors of the wealth and greatness of the State. For the working class, on the contrary, it felt no more regard than was due to subaltern agents of inferior social and economic importance. . . . The members of that class belonged to "the common people", upon whom it was proper to impose a blind obedience, and

¹ Boissonnade, *Le Socialisme d'État*, p. 132.

whose maintenance in the old tradition of economic and social subordination was required by the public weal.¹

Shut out from the mastership, subordinated in the *confrérie*, condemned by the State, the workman felt himself to be confronted by a hostile world with no resources but his own hands and tools and with no backing but from other outcasts in the same sorry plight with himself. His reaction to this impression was the formation of associations in the nature of trade unions, which he called *compagnonnages*. In these associations all the workmen of the same or kindred trades joined together for mutual assistance and support. Narrower than the guild or the *confrérie* in that the basis was sectional, the associations were much wider in that the basis was not local, seeing that men whom their position deprived of local attachments became indifferent to local ties, and began to roam the kingdom in search of employment. When the nomadic workman came to a strange city, the *compagnonnage* gave him a welcome, helped him to find a job, and cared for him till the job was found. By means of it he was also enabled to join with his fellows in demanding better conditions and in boycotting the town or the shop in which such conditions were refused. Though not without its uses as a labour bureau, a mutual benefit society, and a guardian of workmen's interests, the operatives' union was regarded with suspicion and dislike. That the masters should dislike it was natural enough, for it was rooted in class antagonism, and by the mere fact of its existence it made an ugly breach in corporate unity. That public authorities should be hostile was not surprising in view of its presumed influence in fostering unrest and undermining security. In spite of official opposition *compagnonnages* continued to flourish, being reconstituted as fast as they were suppressed; and the chief result of prohibition was to drive underground what had once been above-board, and to invest what had once been innocuous with the subversive, anti-social characteristics of the secret society.

The part played by the guild in the industrial life of France has attracted much attention. It was undoubtedly important, but we must be on our guard against attributing to it a predominance which it never possessed, for, as eco-

¹ Boissonnade, *Le Socialisme d'État*, pp. 125-6.

conomic historians have recently pointed out,¹ we are confronted with a situation in which appearances are deceptive. The guilds with their charters and statutes have left extensive evidences of their existence, whereas the unorganized trades, which in the nature of things had few records, have left very little. It would be a mistake to assume that the amount of documentary evidence is indicative of their relative importance. There were no guilds in the country districts, and there were few, if any, in the smaller towns. Amongst the larger towns there were some, such as Lyons, in which the corporate régime had never made any progress, and there were others in which its progress had never been such as to place the incorporated trades in a position of numerical superiority. It was common for incorporation to be confined to the trades whose activities affected the health, safety, or convenience of the public. Apothecaries, surgeons, goldsmiths, and locksmiths were usually incorporated, because incorporation provided the best means of maintaining the standard of honesty and capacity which in the public interest was desirable in those trades. In the rest of the industrial field guild organization was most frequently to be met with in the provision trades, the building trades, and the clothing trades, the general rule being that the more important the trade, the more likely it was to acquire corporate organization.² In spite of this and of the general strength of the corporate movement in the larger centres it is fairly safe to say of the country as a whole that the guild was the exception and the unincorporated trade was the rule.

When from the consideration of industrial production and organization we pass on to study the country's trade in the complementary aspect of commercial distribution, we are called upon immediately to take notice of the importance of the fair in medieval economy. The fair marked a stage in the country's progress from permanent economic stagnation, when trade was confined within the limits of local barter, to incessant economic activity, when business is carried on

¹ Boissonnade, *L'Organisation du travail en Poitou*, Société des Antiquaires de l'Ouest, *Mémoires*, Series II, vol. xxii, pp. 4-11; Hauser, *Ouvriers du temps passé*, pp. xxiii-xxv.

² Hauser, *Les Débuts du capitalisme*, pp. 96-103.

continuously on the basis of international exchange. It met the need which arose when sustained mercantile contacts were prevented by the difficulty, danger, and cost of travel and transport, and were rendered unnecessary by a stage of development in which needs were simple and few, but when it was yet of importance to industry periodically to find an outlet for its products and an opportunity to replenish stocks of raw materials coming in large part from distant provinces or from foreign lands. By meeting together in a certain place at a given time buyers and sellers were assured of ample facilities for doing business, whilst the danger and cost of travel were lessened when merchants bound for the same spot could join forces on the road. The fair thus arose spontaneously where circumstances were favourable to its creation, as in places at the point of intersection of trade routes, where people naturally met; in places where they congregated in pilgrimages or for other reasons; and in places where exceptional industrial development offered special commercial opportunities. In the fairs, the market days of a kingdom, there was a national clearance and restocking in the products of agriculture, in live stock and wines, in the raw materials of industry and in its finished products, in dyes, wool, hides, furs, timbers, and metals, in textiles and clothing, in pottery and glass, in ironmongery and wares of copper and pewter, in jewellery and goldsmiths' work, in furniture, books, and *objets d'art*, and in spices and other exotic products.

Everybody liked the fairs. To the local authority, whether King, seigneur, or municipality, they brought an acceptable profit in tolls, dues, and booth-rents. The townspeople liked them, because they brought trade and traders, with money circulating freely and good rents to be had for houses and lodgings. The surrounding district was pleased, because the countryman could sell his provisions advantageously and turn an honest penny by hiring out sumpter animals or acting as a porter or a guide. All through the district there was a general welcome for the diversion of a great concourse of people, when money would flow, and places of refreshment and entertainment would abound, and a man could drink and gamble and be amused to his heart's content. Add to this the interests of local industry, and it became certain that a demand for the establishment or re-establishment of

fairs would arise as soon as the progress of agriculture and the expansion of industry should result in a commercial revival. When such a revival occurred after the end of the Hundred Years' War, the resultant demand duly made itself felt, and the restoration of fairs became one of the cares of Government in the reigns of Charles VII, Louis XI, Charles VIII, and Louis XII. Sixty-six fairs were established, re-established, or enlarged during the reign of Louis XI. In the next two reigns fairs were created or re-created at the rate of from sixteen to twenty a year, with a grand total of over four hundred creations to evidence the activity of a quarter of a century. Nor was the movement then spent, for in the Parisian region alone thirty more fairs were set up during the first half of the sixteenth century. When a fair was inaugurated or restored, privileges were granted to attract merchants, such as a permit for the circulation of foreign money; an extension of the Royal protection to traders, whose goods were exempted from seizure and distraint; and the suppression of the *droit d'aubaine*, which rendered an alien's inheritance liable to forfeiture to the Crown. In many places, especially in the great towns, the fairs were also declared to be free, which meant that no duties were levied on imports and exports; in some that were exceptionally favoured, special judges, called *conservateurs des foires*, were appointed to hear the causes of traders in a separate mercantile court, a privilege which exempted the trader from the serious delays to which he would have been subjected, if left to the slow-moving machinery of ordinary justice.

As a result of all these acts of creation and resurrection most provinces, nearly all the great cities, and many lesser places found themselves in possession of the coveted privilege. The capital had three fairs, known respectively as the Foire du Lendit, the Fair of Saint-Laurent, and the Saint-Germain Fair. In Rouen, important as the centre of an industrial district and as the natural outlet for the trade of the Seine basin, two fairs were set up by Louis XI, who transferred them from Caen, where they had not flourished. In the same region there was a fair at Falaise, which was popular, and another at Évreux, where the road from Paris to Caen crossed the route from Rouen to Chartres. There were fairs in industrial centres, such as Amiens, Troyes, Provins, and

Châlons; at places on the commercial routes, such as Orleans, Limoges, Bordeaux, Beaucaire, and Lyons; at Toulouse, an entrepôt for the trade with Spain; at Dijon, an ancient capital and long famous as a centre of art and commerce; at Tours and Angers; at Poitiers, Niort, and Fontenay; at Bourges; at Nîmes and Carcassonne. Most of these were 'great fairs', where full privileges were enjoyed and business was done on the grand scale. The commodities handled in the greater fairs were afterwards further distributed in innumerable lesser fairs held in places of secondary importance.

In Paris the old fairs of Lendit and Saint-Laurent had long flourished, and in Charles VIII's reign a new rival appeared in the shape of a fair inaugurated by the Abbey of Saint-Germain-des-Prés under a licence granted by Louis XI shortly before his death. The new fair was so well patronized that in 1512 Charles VIII's old minister, Guillaume Briçonnet, who had become Abbot, decided to house it in buildings more spacious than those in which the monks had first established it in the gardens of the old Hôtel de Navarre. Sweeping away the original structure, he constructed a huge rectangle in stone, supported by buttresses, and surmounted by a timbered roof with an immense span, which was regarded as one of the marvels of the age. In the rectangle were many shops, each with an upper room, and between the rows of shops ran eleven alley-ways, six of them going lengthwise from east to west and five crosswise from north to south. Around the market was a courtyard equipped with many hundred booths for the accommodation of the tumblers, conjurers, and purveyors of victuals and drinks, who provided recreation and refreshment for the fair's clientele. The fair was held twice a year, in February and November, continuing on each occasion for a period of eight days. Superbly housed, and advantageously situated, since it was held in the centre of a frequented quarter of the capital and in proximity to three gates giving facilities for the entry and exit of goods, the fair soon became a centre of commercial activity. So keen was the demand for shop space that foreign dealers were obliged to book their places a year in advance, and there was brisk competition when the accommodation reserved for the merchants of Paris was let by auction at the beginning of every year. Here were displayed

the products of Parisian industry and the output of the manufacturing districts in Normandy and Champagne; the drapers, who came in large numbers, brought cloth from Rouen, Caen, Argentan, Amiens, Beauvais, Abbeville, Amale, Senlis, and Meaux; haberdashery was there and linen-drapery; ironmongery was shown, and so were copper goods; there were evidences of the important part which Paris would play in the trade in jewellery and goldsmiths' work and in objects of art and luxury; and interspersed amongst all these, heightening the effect and imparting a cosmopolitan character to the display, were the costly fantasies for which the enterprise of the mercers made search in all quarters of the known world. Unhappily there was a dark moral side to the bright commercial picture, for a gathering which became a centre of fashion and luxury was soon contaminated by the spread of disorder and licence. In spite of the efforts of the Parlement to arrest the evil, gambling was rife, and games of chance were played openly by gentlemen, by burghers, and by artisans, of whom not a few were lured to their ruin by the insidious pleasures of the card-table and the dice-box. For those who avoided this danger other temptations lay in wait in a place where an unabashed licentiousness had instituted 'a competition of adultery with prostitution'. While courtesans paraded their charms, great ladies came, with faces masked, to keep assignations in the rooms over the shops, which their lovers had hired.¹

The commercial revival, elsewhere so fertile in results, was barren in one region: it failed to breathe new life into the great fairs of Champagne, which in the days of their pristine glory had been the chief trading centre of western Europe. Champagne had much in its favour—navigable rivers and passable roads, which connected Italy and the Mediterranean with the north and the west, an industrious population, prosperous manufactures, agricultural wealth, rich and famous cities. Of these advantages a full use had once been made in the great fairs at Lagny, Bar-sur-Aube, Troyes, and Provins. In them had congregated the merchants of France and Flanders, of Italy and Spain, of Germany and Holland, of England, and of Switzerland; the Jews of every land had

¹ Roulland, 'La Foire Saint-Germain', Société de l'Histoire de Paris, *Mémoires*, vol. iii, pp. 192-6.

resorted to them; there had been shown goods of every kind from all over the known world; and there the ingenuity of Italian money-changers had evolved financial clearing-houses, where bills of exchange might be negotiated and credit transactions carried through. Slowly but surely a succession of misfortunes had robbed Champagne of its commercial prosperity. The fairs had suffered by ill-advised taxation imposed by the Crown when the province passed into the hands of French kings; by equally ill-advised measures against Italian bankers and money-changers; by warfare and invasion; and by the decay of local industries in a time of turmoil and unrest. The decadence thus begun had been hastened and completed by the change in the direction of commercial currents when the movement from the Mediterranean was succeeded by an exchange between Germany, Switzerland, France, and Spain, and when the Champagne fairs were finally ruined by the rivalry of Lyons.

To its situation at the meeting-point of important routes Lyons owed a development which had made the place an active commercial centre from early days. To the south the Rhône gave communication with Dauphiné, Provence, Languedoc, the Mediterranean, Italy, and the Levant; to the east it gave connexion with Savoy, Switzerland, Germany, Piedmont, and the Milanese; to the north the Saône provided a route towards Paris and the northern centres; and on the west a short land journey to Roanne gave connexion with the great fluvial route of the Loire. To this natural entrepôt for foreign trade the Government looked with hopeful eyes to make good the serious loss which had been inflicted upon the kingdom by the decadence of the great fairs of Champagne. A modest beginning had already been made when the municipal authorities of the place sent a deputation to Louis XI, to direct his attention to the opportunities offered by their city, and to invite his co-operation in the task of equipping the Lyons fairs to withstand the competition of popular foreign rivals. Of the trade with Germany, Savoy, Italy, and Spain, said the deputation, the bulk was done in Geneva; to remedy that state of affairs, it was useless to look to fairs in the middle of the kingdom, which were off the trade routes; and yet the application of a remedy was important, because a successful fair might

save the kingdom great sums in gold by enabling it to acquire by exchange what must else be bought for cash. The emissaries of Lyons met with the sympathetic reception which is usually accorded to those who preach to the converted, for the policy of keeping French trade and French gold in French hands was in exact accordance with the King's own cherished ideas. He began by ordering that no French merchant should attend the Geneva fairs and that no alien merchant who should be bound for them should be suffered to transport his merchandise through France. He then instituted four fairs at Lyons of a fortnight each, timed to coincide with the Geneva fairs, and endowed with the fullest privileges for alien traders. The law against trading at Geneva was then rigorously enforced, and the amercing in an enormous penalty of one unhappy delinquent gave warning to the commercial community that unpatriotic avarice would have to reckon with an inflexible Royal resolve.

In the reaction which followed the King's death an attempt was made to undo the work which he had done at Lyons: the States-General of Tours having condemned them, the Lyons fairs were abolished and transferred to Bourges and Troyes. But it was not in the power of reactionary ineptitude to divert the currents of international trade or to frustrate the destiny of the great commercial city in the valley of the Rhône. The foreigner would not go to Berry or Champagne; the attendance at Bourges was so poor that the new fairs were held only twice; and Lyons was speedily replaced in the enjoyment of the fairs, with the loss of which she had been threatened. And not only so, for she was favoured with privileges more extensive than those which she had before possessed, privileges the more remarkable for being granted in defiance of the prevailing mercantile doctrine that it is essential to receive more cash than you pay out. Whereas severe regulation was in force elsewhere, in Lyons there was a régime of absolute freedom, without restriction upon the circulation and exchange of goods or even upon the movement of cash. All who cared to do so were at liberty to come and trade; they enjoyed the Royal safeguard and the protection of their own laws; and there was a quick and trustworthy commercial court for the settlement of disputes.¹

¹ M. Vigne, *La Banque à Lyon du xve au xviii^e siècle*, pp. 62-4, 78-9.

Lyons was the centre of the trade in luxury goods, and that trade was expanding prodigiously under the joint stimulus of economic prosperity, Renaissance fashions, and the influence of Italian example, spread by the wars. These luxury goods were nearly all of foreign origin: silks and embroideries, fine linens and lace, precious stones, tapestries and high-class furniture, faiences and glass, toilet requisites and perfumes, drugs and spices, sugar and preserves, clocks, arms, and leather. By the Rhône they came to Lyons from the East; by that route or by the Alpine passes they came from Italy; the Saône brought them from Germany, Flanders, and the north; and by way of Saint-Jean-de-Luz, Bayonne, and Toulouse they were carried from Spain. To pay for them, France sent such of her products as were in demand in foreign markets: Paris sent millinery and haberdashery; Normandy sent cloth and linen; from Languedoc came cloth and dyes; from Roannais, Lyonnais, and Vivarais came saffron; from these and other districts came tapestries, carpets, hats, ironmongery, pottery, jewellery and plate, toys, salt fish, charcoal, and stone; and Lyons itself put into the market velvets, satins, silks, ribbons, cloth of gold and cloth of silver, books, paper, and playing-cards. The total volume of business transacted in the fairs made a deep impression upon those who were able to appreciate its significance. The trade with Italy, said a Venetian ambassador, was based entirely upon Lyons, and so in large measure was that with Flanders and Spain.

Great as was the importance of the Lyons fairs commercially by reason of their contribution to the general volume of business in commodities, they were yet more important for their influence in the development of banking and exchange, in the establishment of a system of credit, and in the organization of international finance. As the Middle Ages had already discerned in Champagne, something more than a trade in goods was necessary to ensure the success of a great fair, commodity business on a large scale having financial repercussions which demanded the operation of a delicate and intricate financial mechanism. There was, to begin with, the need for currency exchange, a matter which is seldom simple, and which presented immense difficulties in

a time when currencies were many in number and highly inconstant in value and in a place where the presence of numerous foreign dealers meant the prevalence of foreign coins. In the Champagne fairs currency exchange had been conducted in the main by Lombards and Jews. In Lyons and other places at the beginning of the sixteenth century it was done in part by merchants and bankers and in part by goldsmiths. In Paris the Pont-au-Change took its name from the fact that the money-changers were established in its shops. Money-changers, who had been organized in the fifteenth century under the Mint, were to receive new privileges in the course of the sixteenth century, when the goldsmiths would be debarred from competing with them. This was because currency speculation was found to be fertile in monetary evils, denuding the kingdom of its own good coins and inundating it with depreciated foreign pieces. It was seen that honesty and capacity in those who conducted exchange business were necessary to retrieve the situation, and it was thought that the best way to secure the desired qualities was to give the money-changer an official position and by investing him with a monopoly to eliminate the speculative participant in the business of exchange.

The organization of currency exchange was a step in the right direction, but, the cost and danger of moving specie being what they were, the business of the great fairs could not have prospered, and perhaps could scarcely have survived at all, upon the basis of cash transactions. Aided by their knowledge of commercial practices in the East, where business was more highly developed, the Jewish and Italian merchants who frequented the Champagne fairs applied to the business of those fairs devices by which the need for cash payments was in large measure obviated. These devices were the letter of credit and the bill of exchange, which is an order to pay a certain sum in a certain place to the drawer or to a named payee. If A, a Rouen draper, sold 100 *écus*' worth of cloth to B, a Florentine merchant, and C, a Genoese importer, consigned 100 *écus*' worth of spices to D, a Paris grocer, the necessity for B to send 100 *écus* all the way to France and for D to send a like amount all the way back again could be obviated by settlements between the two French merchants in one country and the two Italians

in the other. Still more readily might a transfer of cash be avoided, when it was known that the draper, the merchant, the importer, and the grocer were about to meet, in person or by their respective agents, in a forthcoming fair. What could then be done was this: B sent to A an order authorizing him to call for payment of 100 *écus*; A made the order over to D; and D passed it on to C. At the worst there was then a transfer of 100 *écus* from Florence to Genoa; but if, as was likely, C owed 100 *écus* to B or to some other merchant in Florence, the bill was sent on again, to be met in Florence, and no cash was moved except from the pocket of D to the pocket of A in France and perhaps also from the till of B to that of the ultimate payee in Florence. When the system was perfected, the bill of exchange was made out in triplicate; two copies were sent separately, one of them, which was marked 'secunda', being a duplicate; the third was retained, and was destroyed when the transaction had been completed. Payment was generally fixed for a fair, and a mechanism was soon devised which made the great fairs into regular clearing-houses for the settlement of accounts. Nor was this all, for from their original uses, which were ancillary to the currency, bills of exchange developed into credit instruments, performing in that capacity functions so important that they have been regarded as the great discovery of modern commerce.

The growth of the fairs was accompanied by a great development in the business of commercial banking, which at first had been hampered by the ecclesiastical ban on usury and by the popular notion that there was something inherently wicked in the practice of lending money at interest. Trade cannot prosper without capital, and as soon as it began to be organized upon any considerable scale, it became necessary to invent devices for circumventing the obstructive ecclesiastical prohibition. To this the ingenuity of the commercial classes was not unequal: banking was established early in Italy, and from the twelfth century Italian bankers and money-lenders were to be found in the south of France, where Cahors and Lyons were centres of banking and exchange. With the progress of commerce subsequently resulting from the establishment of peace, security, and stable government, banking made further and rapid strides, and in Lyons, Paris, Bordeaux, and other commercial centres in

France the Italians opened houses in which they did a general banking business, receiving cash on deposit, lending it at interest, liquidating accounts for their clients, settling balances of payment between them, negotiating letters of credit, and dealing in exchange. In Louis XI's time there were two Medici banks in Lyons, and other Florentine bankers were established in that city and in Montpellier, Marseilles, and Aigues-Mortes. When Piero de' Medici refused to lend money to Charles VIII in 1494, the Medici agents were expelled, and it was expected for a time that all Piero's fellow citizens would be driven out; but after his fall a treaty conferred upon Florentine citizens the privilege of trading in France with the same rights as French subjects. Though the Florentines were pre-eminent in banking and exchange business, they were not without rivals; the prosperity of the Lyons fairs attracted thither Italian bankers from Milan, Genoa, Lucca, and Venice, and German bankers from Hamburg, Augsburg, Frankfort, and Nuremberg; nor was Lyons wholly lacking in native merchants fitted by abilities and resources to stand up against foreign competition. The Sauli, who supplied Charles VIII with money for his Italian adventure, had gone to Lyons from Genoa. Another Italian firm relieved the financial necessities of Louis XII in 1513. Large sums were lent to Francis I by a German, who belonged to the Nuremberg family of Kleber, and had been trained in the Imhof bank in his native city. Jean Cléberger, to give him the Gallicized name by which he was known in France, was living at Lyons in 1515, and, finally settling there, acquired a great reputation for wealth and munificence. With the fairs on the flood tide of prosperity, and with their fame maintained and enhanced by the mechanism of the clearing-house, which these bankers helped to perfect, the city of Lyons was becoming, and for a time would remain, the financial centre of Europe.

The ban on usury was not without effect upon the development of commerce, for men with money, afraid or ashamed to lend it at interest, had sought for other ways of making it productive, and no other was so attractive as an investment in business. Thus it came about that nobles, burghers, municipalities, and ecclesiastical corporations took to investing

their spare cash in trade, and often to a large amount, so that it became possible to organize business on a large scale, with the establishment of depots and branches, the employment of agents and correspondents, and the purchase or chartering of fleets of ships. Individualistic in outlook, free from the limitations and restrictions of industrial organization, and unfettered by nicety of conscience, the capitalist trader contributed powerfully to the commercial revival, but at the same time lowered the tone of commercial morality. With all the power which wealth and organization placed at his disposal, he sought his own pecuniary advantage, and too often he sought it by any means, whether fair or foul. His pet device was the 'corner' or monopolistic control of a market. One mercantile house cornered the trade in spices; another established control over the fur trade; a third engrossed Catalan textiles. In Paris the wine trade was in the hands of a ring. The object of the monopoly, and the inevitable outcome of every effective corner, was the fleecing of the consumer, the consequences to the public being peculiarly disastrous when the activities of the speculator were extended to the necessities of life, such as grain. 'It has come to our knowledge', said Francis I in an edict, 'that divers persons, having before their eyes neither the fear of God, nor charity, nor the salvation of their souls, have been induced by avarice and cupidity to buy a great quantity of all manner of corn, some of it whilst still unharvested and standing green in the fields, and the rest covertly in private houses instead of in market overt, so that they may store it in barns and thereafter sell it at their own good will and pleasure so soon as they shall see the people to be in want.' The edict therefore directed that all corn should be sold in the public markets and not elsewhere, and ordered that it should be offered first and foremost to the common people requiring the same for their daily bread.

Even when unaffected by the pernicious influence of the profiteer, the grain trade presented one of the most perplexing problems of medieval economy. It was confronted by the manifold difficulties inherent in inferior cultivation, unreliable storage facilities, and inadequate means of communication. It was nearly impossible to move grain in bulk from one district to another, and within the district move-

ment was neither easy nor cheap. Each province had to supply its own needs, and every town was dependent upon such corn as was grown in its vicinity or upon such as could be brought to it by river or by sea. A bad year might thus lead to dearth or famine, or it might happen that 'of two parts of the same county one would wallow in plenty, whilst the other was in an extremity of distress'.¹ One result of this state of affairs was that the grain trade was subjected to elaborate regulations, the rigours of which were not conducive to increased production. Another result, not less discouraging to enterprise, was the unsatisfactory nature of the limited local market, in which prices were disappointingly low in good years, when the grower had corn to sell, and temptingly remunerative only when the season was bad and he had little or nothing to offer. The limited market also provided the speculator with opportunities too numerous to be consistent with a healthy trade. A further drawback was the lack of reliable information; there were no statistics or returns; no one knew how much corn had been grown, or how much had been exported, or how much was stored; nor was any attempt made to estimate demand and adjust supply. People were left to form their own conclusions about the adequacy of supplies, and in the absence of reliable data they were apt to fall into panics for which there was no real cause. 'The cry of *disette* is heard as soon as some busybody asserts that there is not enough grain in town to last until the next harvest. . . . Each worthy burgher was possessed with the idea that famine stared him in the face, if the granaries of the town did not actually contain all the grain that would be needed till the next harvest. . . . There was no conception of a steady flow of trade supplying the wants of the town from month to month without ever accumulating any very considerable reserve. . . . There was a feeling that the producing region should never permit the exportation of grain unless the maintenance of the area until the next harvest was assured. . . . Each town was to secure supplies for itself without regard to the needs of other towns.'²

A selfish apprehension was not unnatural in people confronted by the ever present menace that the caprices of the

¹ *Grande Encyclopédie*, vol. i, p. 889.

² Usher, *The History of the Grain Trade in Northern France*, p. 197.

weather might produce a situation which existing communications and trade facilities would render irremediable. Scarcity due to late frosts, to excessive rains, or to prolonged droughts, and the taking of measures to alleviate want, are too commonly mentioned in the records to allow us to suppose that the prevailing anxieties were hysterical. Nowhere was supply better organized than in Paris; yet even in that favoured market prices fluctuated in a disconcerting manner. As the result of a long winter and bad harvest grain sold in the capital at 2*l.* the *setier* in 1482. In 1521 there was another bad harvest, and it sold at 3*l.*, the poor being 'in intolerable indigence', and vengeance being taken upon unscrupulous bakers, who tried to exploit the position. In the next year grain was again very dear, this time on account of persistent rain, and the shrine of Saint Geneviève was carried in procession. In 1523 a severe frost sent grain prices rocketing from 21*s.* to 4*l.* 10*s.* In 1528 a hail-storm sent the price from 35*s.* to 70*s.* In 1529 the situation again caused anxiety, and there were more processions to implore a cessation of the pernicious rains. In Rouen the hard-headed Normans seem to have thought that Heaven would be more likely to help those who helped themselves, and, grain having become very dear in 1497 through the operations of exporters, they put an embargo on the grain ships, and stripped them of their tackle for fear lest they should slip away by night. The placing of an embargo on grain was an instinctive response to the first whisper of scarcity. Thrice in Paris in the first decade of the sixteenth century and thrice at Rouen within the same period the corn of the environs was earmarked for local consumption, with orders to the dealers to lodge it in the municipal granaries and with a prohibition of export till local needs were met. In Languedoc export was permitted in two only of the years from 1495 to 1509. In 1508 the Seneschals of Armagnac and Quercy refused to let grain leave for Guyenne till sure of adequate supplies for their own districts. When the authorities of Valois and Clermont forbade the removal of corn from their districts in 1491, their action resulted in a great rise in its price in the town of Compiègne, whose officers protested, but in vain, so that Compiègne had to feed itself as best it could. Divers persons being reputed to have great quantities

of corn in their possession and to be withholding it from sale, the Municipality instituted domiciliary visits 'to search and see what quantity of corn there was, so that supplies might be given to the poor people'. To ensure supplies at reasonable rates and to lessen the scandal of scarcity, they also sent out to towns and villages in the neighbourhood and bought corn wherever it could be found. They went on to control the price of bread, ordering the bakers to sell loaves of a specified weight at prices varying with the market price of corn.

In an age of defective communications the provisioning of urban agglomerations presented difficulties, but it was not in towns that suffering was most acute in periods of dearth. To begin with, apart from a few places such as Paris, Rouen, and Lyons, the towns were quite small. In the next place, their wealth enabled them to attract, and their commercial organization to obtain, supplies. Nor was there much danger in the areas comprised in the market system of a great city, such as the towns of the Upper Seine, the Upper Loire, and the Upper Rhône and the places on the trade routes. 'These places probably suffered less from the disorders of the grain trade than any other type of market area. They enjoyed all the advantages of freedom from intimate connexion with the large towns, and, at the same time, all the possibilities of relief assured them by the proximity of such organized trade as existed.' It was usually in the more remote regions that the pinch was felt most quickly and most acutely. In these regions, where there was no organized trade and little private enterprise, there was no machinery for meeting a failure of crops by extraneous assistance. Here, therefore, the spectre of famine, an occasional visitant elsewhere, followed gaunt and grim upon the heels of every frost and of every drought.¹

In the Parisian region the grain trade had been organized in the thirteenth century to draw supplies by land from the arable land round the city and by water from the valleys of the Seine, Oise, and Marne. In the fifteenth century the merchants of Paris extended their operations to new districts, one of them being Beauce, the great granary of France, and

¹ Usher, *The History of the Grain Trade in Northern France*, pp. 180-1, 203-4, 207-II.

the other being the Seine valley below Mantes, where they clashed with the buyers from Rouen until at the beginning of the sixteenth century the areas of the two cities were delimited by an arrangement arrived at between them. In the region embraced in the Parisian system no other places were allowed to operate without permission. Despite restrictions, however, the export trade was able to draw upon these localities, for Paris did not normally consume the whole yield. These exports were shipped by the ports on the Seine or by the Somme coast towns.

Very different was the situation at Lyons, where at the best of times supplies were barely adequate and in unfavourable seasons caused great anxiety. Since good corn land in the vicinity of the city was small in extent, it was necessary to bring supplies from a distance, and the operation was not easy. From the south corn could reach Lyons only by ascending a rapid river; from Auvergne it must travel mainly by road; and in the north, whence fluvial transport would have been easy, the bulk of the surplus supplies was grown on land at inconvenient distances from the river. With its difficulties intensified by the influx of population resulting from the success of the fairs, the city dallied for a time with a system of municipal trading, but found it costly, and was glad to abandon it when the development of an organized wholesale trade gave a promise of relief by private enterprise. This trade furnished itself in the main in Dauphiné, Bresse, and Burgundy, though Burgundy was not without drawbacks as a source of supply. Its most productive lands were inaccessible; its trade organization was backward, with landlords and dealers inclined to hoard, and with few active trade centres; and in one of those centres, Dijon, the Lyons merchants were obstructed by the local resentment there as everywhere provoked by outside competition.

In the Loire valley the grain trade was dominated by the city of Nantes, whose merchants did business with Spain and Portugal, and were ready to take for domestic supply and for the sustenance of their export trade all the corn available in Touraine or in other regions of the river basin. In the upper reaches the surplus was small, and from the more productive areas a part of the crops was carried away through Roanne to relieve the needs of Lyons. Orleans was also sup-

plied in part from Touraine, and in bad years Tours and Blois went afield to supplement the inadequate yield of their own respective environs. Mention must also be made of Poitou, an active producer, which rarely failed to have a surplus, and carried on a brisk trade with adjoining provinces. When seasons were good and export was permitted, Poitou also furnished supplies for the foreign trade, which were sent down the Sèvre or were handled on the wharves of the coastal ports.¹

It will have appeared from what I have written that the food hoarder and the profiteer are not to be regarded as original products of our own time of tribulation. To the elimination of these malign self-seekers the meticulous regimentation of the medieval grain trade was in large measure directed. The social conscience being inoperative, it was thought necessary that the grower, the dealer, the miller, the baker, the exporter, and the consumer should all be controlled for the general good. The grower, if left to himself, would have been tempted to hoard against a time of deficient supplies and rising prices: he was not left to himself, but was made the object of domiciliary visits, paid with a view to deciding how much of his crop he might fairly claim for his own use and how much he should be compelled to sell. The wholesale trade in grain was entrusted to a special class of merchants, and their operations were subjected to a severe control. Millers and bakers were permitted to deal in grain only so far as might be necessary to supply their own needs, and even to that limited extent they must furnish themselves through authorized channels. They might not go into the country to buy standing crops, nor make a deal in a private house, nor seal a bargain in a tavern; their purchases had to be made in the markets, and were there postponed to the purchases of private consumers, buying to supply their personal needs. The private buyer might not purchase more than was wanted for the satisfaction of his own reasonable requirements. In bad years grain might not be used in the making of brandy or beer. Grain which had reached a central market

¹ Usher, *The History of the Grain Trade in Northern France*, pp. 45-55, 61-2, 81-2, 126-44; Boissonnade, *Essai sur l'organisation du travail en Poitou*, Société des Antiquaires de l'Ouest, *Mémoires*, Series II, vol. xxi, pp. 91-2, 106-9.

might not be removed without a licence, which was refused at the slightest hint of impending scarcity; offenders against this rule were heavily punished, and delation was encouraged by the offer of rewards to informers. Export was allowed when harvests were good, but licences were required, and the granting of these was a matter which Francis I would organize under the Crown.¹ It would seem probable that meticulous regulation tended to defeat its own object by discouraging enterprise and so retarding development. Nevertheless the grain trade was expanding under the joint influence of agricultural revival and commercial progress, and, as it expanded, it began to throw off medieval restraints. So long as the lack of adequate transport facilities inspired fears for the sufficiency of supplies, the idea of internal freedom, broached in the States-General of Tours, could not make headway rapidly; but in 1515 there were indications that a day of greater freedom was at hand, when trade between provinces would be organized on a national basis and foreign dealings would assume the character of a regular export trade.²

At the beginning of the sixteenth century the foreign trade of France was carried on in part upon the basis of commercial relations of long standing, and in part under recent commercial treaties, of which a good many had been brought into force. During the second half of the fifteenth century the Government of France had negotiated arrangements with Spain, with Portugal, with Denmark, with the Hanseatic League, with England, and with Switzerland, and these arrangements directed the flow of trade in old channels or initiated a flow in new ones. For the most part the treaties provided for a system of free importation and exportation between the contracting parties, a special clause relative to the grain trade reserving liberty to suspend exports in times of dearth. In the grain trade the organization of internal commerce on a national as opposed to a provincial basis was being accompanied by the emergence of the kingdom in the

¹ Boissonnade, *op. cit.*, pp. 91-100.

² Araskhianantz, 'Die französische Getreidehandelspolitik bis zum Jahre 1789 in ihrem Zusammenhange mit der Land-, Volks- und Finanzwirthschaft Frankreichs', in *Staats- und sozialwissenschaftliche Forschungen*, ed. G. Schmoller, vol. iv, part iii, pp. 42-5.

international sphere as an exporting unit. The two developments were made by degrees, and may be assigned to the period which elapsed between the accession of Charles VIII and the year 1539. Before 1539 there was no legislative regulation of the foreign trade in grain, whilst the dues which affected exports, being purely fiscal, produced no effect either in the way of protection or in the way of restriction. The system in force oscillated between total prohibition on the one hand, and freedom, partial or complete, on the other, with no distinction between internal and external trade; permits to move grain were issued regionally upon the basis of an excess of supplies, and, when granted, they covered foreign sales as well as consignments to other parts of the kingdom. This circumstance the Crown noted in the year 1515, expressing disapproval, but not at that time attempting a remedy.

As a result of the treaties which established a commercial system between many of her leading States Europe seemed to be heading for the adoption of unfettered trade; freedom of trade had come to be recognized as an ideal; and the States of Tours declared in round terms that all merchants ought to enjoy the same liberty to trade with other nationals as with their own fellow subjects. Unhappily, when the relics of medieval obstruction seemed to be in process of removal, the path of economic sanity became impeded by two fresh barriers. One was the rise of the mercantile theory, which proclaimed that money is the only wealth, a theory inducing in the official mind a belief that the accumulation of the precious metals should be the prime object of economic policy. As a result of that belief rulers tended to entertain an indifference to commercial activity as such and a positive aversion to all such international trade as showed an excess of imports over exports, and therefore produced an unfavourable balance to be liquidated in cash to the depletion of monetary stocks. To the influence of the mercantile theory may be ascribed the sumptuary laws, of which the object was to restrict imports by banning expensive foreign dress fabrics and other exotic luxuries; and to it was also due the efforts to establish domestic manufactures, such as the silk trade of Lyons, which were designed to supersede imported commodities by a supply of home-made substitutes. The

other barrier, the product of causes not so much economic as political, was the dominance of an attitude of mind which has reappeared in our own time, and is now commonly known as economic nationalism. Thus a cloud, small as yet, but ominous, was thrown across a horizon which else was brightening with the promise of improved communications, reviving agriculture, expanding trade, and a continuous growth in the contacts between nation and nation.

At the volume of the foreign trade of France in or about the year 1515 it is only possible to make a guess. There is nothing in the way of statistical information until a generation later, and that information, when available, has no pretension to exhibit the accuracy expected in our own time in the compilation of trade figures. It was estimated in the middle of the sixteenth century that the total volume of French foreign trade was about ninety million *livres tournois*, imports standing at about forty million *livres* and exports at about fifty million. How far the trade of 1515 approximated to these figures cannot be determined: by 1556 there had been some deflection of trade currents, and there had been notable variations in prices caused by the change in the value of money; but the return of 1556, if of little use for statistical estimation in 1515, may serve as a rough guide to the general trend of international dealings. In the earlier year, as in the later, the chief suppliers of French needs and the chief customers for French produce and manufactures were Italy and the Levant, Spain and Portugal, the British Isles, the Low Countries, Scandinavia and the Hanseatic League, Germany, and Switzerland.

Trade relations with Italy reached their zenith in the reigns of Charles VIII and Louis XII, subsequently suffering a decline. The relations were of old standing: Italian merchants had contributed to the prosperity of the Champagne fairs; they had later helped to build up the prosperity of Lyons and other towns in southern France; Italian manufacturers had long supplied luxury goods; and Italian shippers had handled the products of the East. The decline which began in the sixteenth century arose from a variety of causes, some political and some economic. From being a theatre of war Italy became an Imperial preserve, and neither state was favourable to an extension of trade relations with

France. Nor could she suffer aught but ill from the predominance of the mercantile theory, which led French Kings to look with disfavour upon an importation productive of adverse balances and to check it by sumptuary legislation or by the creation of domestic manufactures. She suffered also, and suffered most heavily, by the consequences of the geographical discoveries which altered the whole flow of international trade. During the Middle Ages she had enjoyed a virtual monopoly of the international trade in the products of the East: in silks and brocades, in carpets, in china and glass, in drugs and spices, in dyes, in pearls and precious stones. When these commodities came, as most of them did, from distant regions of the East and had to be carried overland for shipment to Europe through Alexandria or the Levant, the cost of transport was necessarily very great, and a fatal blow to the Italian entrepôt trade in them was dealt by the maritime discoveries, which offered the alternative of cheap sea carriage. A gradual but inexorable process would withdraw the Eastern trade from Venice and establish it in Lisbon and Antwerp. From Italy itself France continued to take china and glass, silks and brocades, cloth of gold and cloth of silver, ribbons and velvets, hosiery, hats, and feathers, leather, alum and iron, horses and falcons.

The trade in the various condiments and flavouring agents collectively known as spices was of great importance in the Middle Ages, when dishes and drinks were highly seasoned and the popular taste favoured the employment of agents likely to induce thirst. Pepper, as a possessor of this property, was eaten with meat and fish, was mixed in sauces, and was even worked into pastry. Cloves were a favourite flavouring, being used with meat and with fish, in sauces and in stuffings, and in spiced wine; they were expensive, because they came from the distant Moluccas; but large stocks were always held, 'and the most modest *bourgeois* home would have felt shame, if a supply were not found in its larder as in that of the princely mansion'.¹ Nutmeg, aniseed, cardamom, cinnamon, and ginger were also used to season dishes and drinks. For ginger a medicinal use was found, since it was employed in the composition of opiates, and the East also furnished

¹ Heyd, *Histoire du commerce du Levant au moyen-âge*, trans. Furcy Raynaud, vol. ii, pp. 603-7.

to the European pharmacopoeia laudanum, mastic, and three agents prized by medieval medicine for the preparation of purgatives, namely aloes, rhubarb, and scammony. The best aloes came from Socotra, whilst Arabia and India also yielded supplies; there was some industrial use of them; and mastic was turned to account industrially in the making of varnish. In the list of Eastern products of which the use was wholly or mainly medicinal it is proper to include a substance for which the modern world has found much other employment. Long consumed as a juice in India and China, sugar was first refined on the Persian Gulf, and was exported through Syrian ports. Though production increased, the price remained high; sold as a drug in the shops of the apothecaries, it was used in the concoction of a syrup administered for the relief of consumption and coughs; and its place as a sweetening agent in daily life was filled by honey. After the discovery of the New World, Europe began to receive supplies of sugar superior in quality to the Eastern product and at the same time lower in price, and this led to some increase in the consumption of preserved fruits, but many years had yet to elapse before the use of sugar would become generally common.

Of the perfumes and aromatic substances prevalent in Christendom nearly all came from the East. There were camphor and musk, Java incense or benzoin, balsam, amber, and aromatic woods. Balsam, which came from Egypt and Arabia, was used in embalming, in baptismal water and holy unctions, and also in medicine for the treatment of wounds. The embalmer also made use of amber, and so did the distiller of perfumes and the carver of statuettes. Sandalwood and other aromatic and decorative woods were employed by perfume-makers and by joiners. Brazil-wood yielded one of the dyeing and tanning agents which Europe obtained from the East; the others were madder, indigo, saffron, cochineal, nut-galls, lac, and alum, the part played by alum in the Eastern trade declining sensibly, however, after the discovery of alum deposits in the Papal States. To another branch of the trade belonged ivory, pearls, and precious stones, which Africa and the East alone supplied. Egypt sent beryls, emeralds, and rubies; from Persia came turquoises, rubies, and lapis lazuli; and from India and Ceylon came

emeralds and sapphires, rubies, amethysts, opals, and garnets, the topaz and the jacinth, the chalcedony and the cornelian, and the costly diamond. As taste favoured the Eastern trade in the matter of spices, so did fashion in the matter alike of precious stones and of costly fabrics. Ever since the time of the Crusades there had been a vogue for Eastern silks and brocades for purposes of attire and for the adornment of chapels, living-rooms, and pavilions. The best carpets and the finest glass and porcelain were also Oriental products. For what she took from Italy and the East France paid so far as she could with grain, wool, linen, and cloth; but the cost of the commodities which she imported was high, and the persistence of adverse balances was a source of unceasing anxiety to her rulers.

Placed in direct contact with the East by the success of her maritime exploration, Portugal could give a cheap sea passage to the commodities which before had travelled expensively by land, and Lisbon was enabled to out-distance Venice in the entrepôt trade in spices, preserves, perfumes, drugs, dyes, precious stones, and Eastern fabrics. Adding to these some products of her own, Portugal sent to France fruits, oils, wines, leather, skins, and horses. In exchange she took grain and wines. In the foreign trade of France, however, her importance was less than that of Spain. Nowhere did the produce of French fields and vineyards or the products of French industry enjoy so fair a field as in the country which neglected her own opportunities for production under the demoralizing influence of easily gotten colonial wealth. Spain was a customer of France for corn, woad, salt meat, linen, woollen textiles, paper, and ironmongery. She sold to France wool, fruits, nuts, oils, leather goods, arms, some cloth, and horses; and since the trade was always in favour of France, there was a steady flow of gold and silver to balance the account. In 1556 bullion accounted for more than one-half of French imports from Spain.

Trade between France and England had grown steadily since the end of the Hundred Years' War, a *rapprochement* under Louis XI being followed under his successors by a still closer commercial understanding, and racial antipathy and the rancorous memories of former conflicts being outweighed by the interest of a commercial exchange which was

of the utmost value to each participant. For the value of the exchange lay in the fact that it was complementary and not competitive. The agriculture of England was backward, and she was an importer of produce with which she was unable to supply herself. She was often an importer of corn, particularly in bad seasons, which were of frequent occurrence and invariably caused high prices in the English market. It has been calculated that the average price of the quarter of wheat in England during the second half of the fifteenth century exceeded by more than a third that which obtained in France, and that during the first thirty years of the sixteenth century the one exceeded the other by nearly a half. So far from being a trade rival in the matter of manufactures, England was in a position of great inferiority, and, looking to France to supply her needs in many fields, furnished that country with one of the chief outlets for the surplus of its industrial production.

To the export trade with England French agriculture made several notable contributions. Normandy, Picardy, and the Île-de-France sent corn. Gascony, Burgundy, Auxerre, Orléanais, Saintonge, Anjou, and Bordeaux nourished the wine trade, which in the middle of the sixteenth century attained an annual value of three and a half million *livres*, and had long necessitated the dispatch of large mercantile fleets to Rouen and the Biscay ports. England was also a consumer of French vegetables, fruits, and nuts, especially walnuts, almonds, and prunes; of oils, vinegar, and grease; of honey from Languedoc, Narbonnais, and Médoc; of the scarlet dyes of Languedoc and Provence, of dyer's weed and madder from Normandy, and of pastel from Toulouse; and of Norman cattle. Scarcely less important than the export of wine was the export of salt, of which great quantities were taken from Brittany, Poitou, and the littoral of the Bay of Biscay. From no other source of supply could the English procure salt of a like quality for the preservation of meat and fish; and such preservation possessed much importance in view of the deficiencies in the pastoral industry, which cut off supplies of fresh meat in winter, of the deficiencies in communications, which greatly restricted supplies of fresh fish, and of the numerous fast-days, which caused fish in one form or another to be in constant demand.

From her forests France sent box-wood, cork-wood, pitch-pine, building-timbers, pitch, resin, and turpentine; and along with plaster of Paris she sent from her quarries Caen stone, Pyrenean marble, the mill-stones of the Île-de-France and Brie, and the granite of the Cotentin. The influence of fashion and their own intrinsic excellence made a market in England for many of the products of French industry. There was a sale there for cloth and other textiles of all sorts, for lace and embroidery, for clothing, hats, and millinery. The export of linen was specially important, the cheapness of French linen ensuring large sales. Normandy sent napkins and table-linen; Rheims, Troyes, and Caen sent damasks; Normandy and Brittany sent canvas, sacking, buckram, and a sailcloth which was much esteemed. Amongst other commodities included in the export trade were jewellery, plate, and clocks, ironmongery and cutlery, pottery and glass, medicines, soaps, and perfumes, toys and dolls, fancy goods, dice, and tennis-balls and tennis-rackets. In exchange for these England sent the products of her agricultural and pastoral industries and of her fisheries, a good many metals, and some manufactures, the pastoral industry and the fisheries contributing most largely to the general total. Salt fish was shipped to Rouen, Brest, Nantes, Bordeaux, and La Rochelle, and English wool was bought largely by France every year. Enormous quantities of wool were produced by the countless flocks which browsed on the pasture lands of the English shires, and much of it was of the fine quality suitable for the best French work. Horses of English breed were also popular in France, and there was some trade in tallow, grease, hides, and leather, in salt meat and bacon, and in butter and cheese. Mines and quarries contributed copper, tin, and lead, saltpetre and alabaster, and most of such coal as was used by the French metallurgical industries. From English looms came a certain amount of coarse cloth. As France did not buy from England as much as she sold to her, the trade with England was amongst those valued by French Governments for a succession of favourable balances. In 1556 the total trade between the two countries was believed to reach the respectable figure of ten million *livres*.

With the Low Countries France carried on an active trade both by sea and by land. On land the main commercial

current flowed through Bapaume, a town advantageously situated at the point of intersection of the roads from Cambrai to Amiens and from Rheims to Arras, which carried to Flanders and Hainault all the traffic of central and southern France. By sea there was a steady flow of commerce from all the ports of the Channel, of Brittany, and of the Bay of Biscay. Great consumers of wine, brandy, and salt, intermediaries for the trade in those commodities with the North, active in the production of cloth and linen, and competing through the rising commercial centre of Antwerp for a share in the lucrative inheritance of the dispossessed Venetians, the Low Countries did with France a business which steadily increased until it was checked in the sixteenth century by the interference of armed contention and economic warfare. The rise and fall of the trade may be traced in the figures given for the composition of the fleets which sailed from the ports of Brittany with their burdens of salt and wine: numbering from fifty to one hundred vessels under Louis XI and from one hundred to one hundred and fifty under Charles VIII, these fleets reached their greatest size under Louis XII, when they comprised as many as two hundred sail. In addition to salt and wine France sent fish, dyes, prunes, honey, some corn, and some wool. The vessels of Bayonne and La Rochelle carried the wines of Saintonge and Gascony. Poitou sent salt, wool, and corn. Madder was consigned by Normandy, and pastel was sent both by that province and also by way of Bordeaux from the south. The wines of inland districts, and notably those of Orleanais and of Burgundian vineyards, travelled by road. In exchange France took cloth and serges, tapestries and fine linen, mercery and lace, spices and perfumes, precious stones and jewellery, metals, leather and hides, cheeses, and chargers and cart-horses.

Of French trade with Germany, with the Baltic and Scandinavia, and with Switzerland there is not much to be said. The trade with Germany showed a tendency to expand. France sent wine, woad, salt, cloth, oils, and fruits, and took in exchange silver, copper, tin, and brass, arms, tools, and ironmongery, leather and hides, cloth and wool, fish, cheese, hams, and horses, together with furs, of which a great part came through Hamburg from Russia. With the Baltic and

Scandinavia a good trade was beginning to arise under the favouring influence of cheap sea carriage and the absence of obstructive tolls. French salt was taken to Norway and Sweden, to Livonia, Lithuania, and Poland. There was a brisk trade through Danzig. Norway and Sweden also consumed French wine and French corn, and purchased from France part of their requirements in metals and cloth. The Scandinavian countries sent in return salt fish and timber, especially wood for shipbuilding, pitch, tar, and turpentine, salt meat and butter, wax and tallow, and furs and skins. Another market for the disposal of French cereals and French wines was also arising in Switzerland, the country which had made a lucrative trade of war, and was enriched by political pensions, by military pay, and by the spoils of her victorious and predatory arms.

The task to which these chapters have been devoted is now accomplished, and the economic state of Francis I's future kingdom has been surveyed in all its aspects. Despite some shadows upon the picture the prevailing tone is one of brightness and almost of brilliance. A harmonious blend may be seen of the dominant features of political and economic life—the establishment of security and good government; the growth of population; the revival of agriculture; the development of old industries and the creation of new ones; the maritime discoveries which augmented the supply of familiar commodities, introduced fresh ones, and created new markets; the consequent expansion of commerce; the influx of precious metals, which stimulated exchanges and raised prices; the increase of wealth; the progress of banking with its accompanying extension of credit facilities; the making of personal property more fluid and of real property more marketable. In the minds of contemporaries the picture awoke different feelings: the beholder, when a subject, gazed upon it with pride, and, when an alien, he viewed it with envy; but none failed to comprehend its message. The ambassadors of Venice, observant and well informed, echoed the tribute of the shrewd Machiavelli to the fertility and prosperity of this foreign land, to its agricultural wealth, industrial ability, and commercial success. 'Where in Louis XI's time you would have found one rich merchant', wrote

Seyssel,¹ 'you may now find more than fifty, for of yore there were not as many merchants in any great city as are now to be found in every little town; in all the streets there is scarcely a house that is not a shop or a workshop; and a journey to Rome or Naples or London or elsewhere over-sea is reckoned less formidable by our generation than was a journey to Lyons or Geneva in earlier days. . . . Besides, throughout the length and breadth of the kingdom there is an expenditure on pleasure and amusement that none but a rich country could support.' The economic science of our own day does not reject these estimates. 'Despite incompleteness, incoherence, and mistakes', says one of its exponents, 'the work of the Valois lacked neither greatness nor range. Though rendered ephemeral by the effects of the Wars of Religion, that work yet prepared a future which would be more stable and would prove to be pregnant with possibilities. In the Age of the Renaissance the foundations of an edifice were laid by the labours of the Crown during a century and a half. To the genius of Henri IV, Richelieu, and Colbert were due the fixing of its proportions, the working out of its details, the insistence upon a harmonious, complete, and solid plan; but the first idea, and the taking of the first steps towards its realization, are attributable to the Crown in the fifteenth and the sixteenth centuries, and must be reckoned among the most remarkable of its achievements.'²

¹ *Histoire singulière du Roy Loys XII*, edit. of 1558, pp. 52-3.

² Boissonnade, *Le Socialisme d'État*, p. 152.

XXXVII

SOCIAL CONDITIONS

THE NOBILITY. THE COURT. THE *TIERS ÉTAT*.
DOMESTIC CONDITIONS. THE TOWNS. THE PLAGUE.
CHARITABLE INSTITUTIONS. MANNERS AND MORALS

AT the beginning of the sixteenth century changes of far-reaching effect were in progress in French society. As we have seen in the preceding chapters, the age was notable politically for the rise of nationalities, the growth of the modern State, and the establishment of monarchical power, whilst economically it was marked by an immense expansion of material wealth, by the first beginnings of capitalistic organization, and by the rise to importance of industry and commerce alongside of the once all-important land. Political and economic changes of this magnitude could not fail to exert a profound influence upon the various classes of which society was composed. Particularly marked were their diverse effects upon the nobility and upon the *bourgeoisie*, the nobles being the chief sufferers by change and the *bourgeoisie* the class which gained the chief advantage. The gains of this class had been remarkable, and were still proceeding unchecked. Allies of the Crown in the struggle with feudalism, the *bourgeoisie* had reaped a rich harvest from victory, for it was to their hands that the direction and control of the mechanism of the new monarchy had been entrusted. To the political power thus acquired they added a dominant economic strength by their possession of money and of practical familiarity with its functions. As the middle classes rose, the class above them declined. In an unsuccessful contest with an advancing Crown the nobles had lost their political power and had been deprived of the greater part of their judicial authority; economic change had greatly affected the land, which had been the source of their economic strength; and they were destined to be the chief sufferers by the monetary revolution, which was now at hand. From the collective pressure of these misfortunes there was but one way of escape, and that was the supplementing of dwindling incomes by the acceptance of Royal pay or of Royal charity.

The outcome was an event of immense political and social significance, for it was no less than the metamorphosis of an independent feudal aristocracy into a subservient Court *noblesse*.

In the France of this period there were three sorts of nobility. First, there was the *noblesse de race*, amongst whom the status, being conferred by birth, belonged to every legitimate son of a noble father. Secondly, there was the nobility of Royal creation, the *noblesse de lettres*, as it was called, where the status was conferred by the King's letters patent, a nobility equivalent legally to the other, and, in the same manner, transmissible to descendants. Thirdly, there was the *noblesse de dignité*, where the status was conferred by tenure of certain posts. To whichever of these classes he belonged, the noble enjoyed certain recognized privileges, which were of two sorts, the one political and civil, and the other judicial. A person of noble rank enjoyed exemption from taxation, and there were certain posts reserved for occupation by members of his class. He might not be exposed to certain degrading penalties, such as the halter and the whip; he had a right to be tried only by the higher tribunals; and, when condemned, he enjoyed special facilities for obtaining a pardon. There had been a period when privilege had been explained and justified by the liability to onerous obligation, for the nobles had once borne the brunt of the military defence of the country; but in this respect time had brought revolutionary changes, and the military service of the holders of fiefs had so far lost its importance that now a man could be a noble without owning fiefs and could own fiefs without being a noble. With nobility become a matter of personal distinction, of civic privilege, and of social prestige, a measure of unpopularity was beginning to attach to exemptions and prerogatives no longer related to liability and obligation. It had not been thought unfair that a noble should be excused from contributing to the pecuniary cost of national defence when he had been liable to pay the *impôt du sang*, that is, to serve in person in that defence and to do so at his own cost; but a different view had begun to prevail when defence came to be entrusted to paid armies and the *ban* was seldom or never called out. A class which avoided its liability to the *impôt*

du sang, but clung jealously to its privilege of exemption from the *taille*, could not fail to excite discontent in the ranks of the unprivileged, whose burden was made the heavier by the selfish retention of an anachronistic immunity.

The distinction between *noblesse de race, de lettres*, and *de dignité* was a matter of legal classification: for practical purposes the distinction was rather between the *haute noblesse*, or baronage, and the *petite noblesse*, or squirearchy. Though the feudal nobility had suffered a notable abatement of its fortunes, there were still great seigneurs who owned vast demesnes, maintained enormous households, and lived in princely state. In 1491 the household expenditure of the Duke of Orleans was at the rate of 30,000 *livres tournois* a year; the salaries and wages of the household amounted to 18,000*l.t.* a year; charity and petty cash accounted in his budget for another 15,000*l.t.*, and more than 60,000*l.t.* was thus expended without making any allowance for the dowering of female relatives or for the Duke's personal expenditure upon jewellery, precious stuffs, furs, and other luxuries. The personal expenditure of Louis de la Trémoille and his wife amounted to 10,000*l.t.* a year without including the salaries and wages of their respective households, and another 4,000*l.t.* was paid away in allowances to relatives. Along with a swarm of indoor and outdoor servants the Sire de Rohan-Guéménée employed some three dozen salaried officials, who lived at his expense, and whose emoluments cost him more than 3,000*l.t.* a year. Close upon one hundred persons, many of them of gentle birth, were employed by the Vicomte and the Vicomtesse de Thouars, who paid away to them in salaries and wages more than 5,000*l.t.* a year. The age was one in which a man's importance was largely gauged by the size of his establishment and the number of his horses, hounds, and falcons; and the consequence was that many a man of middling fortune was induced by vanity to ape to the best of his ability the princely manners of the great.¹

Very different was the mode of life of the *petite noblesse*.

¹ R. de Maulde-la-Clavière, *Histoire de Louis XII*, Part i, vol. ii, pp. 254-5; Duc de la Trémoille, *Les La Trémoille pendant cinq siècles*, vol. ii, pp. 33-40; Dupuy, *Histoire de la réunion de la Bretagne à la France*, vol. ii, p. 439; Duc de la Trémoille, *Chartrier de Thouars*, pp. 60-2.

The typical member of the squirearchy lived in simple and patriarchal style on his estates, receiving a great part of his rents in kind, and consuming his revenues on the spot. Distinguished from his rustic neighbours by the possession of armorial bearings, of a hunting-outfit, and of some fashionable accessories, he was proud of his privileges and tenacious of his social superiority, but his mode of life did not much differ from that of his own more prosperous tenants, and his interests and amusements were those of the rustic world in which he lived. As often as not he himself was a farmer, selling corn and wine, dealing in horses, cows, sheep, and pigs, and pushing his fortunes by an industrious attendance at markets and fairs. Living in constant touch with the peasants, he shared their joys and sorrows, acting as a leader in their sports and games, as their boon companion in the village inn, as an arbiter in their disputes, as an adviser in their difficulties, and as a friend and helper in the time of their need. There cannot be any doubt that in the great majority of country districts the most friendly relations subsisted between the squires and the peasants at the beginning of the sixteenth century, and it might reasonably have been supposed that the *petite noblesse* were destined to fill a role such as that in store for the English country gentlemen and to become the leaders and mouthpieces of the countryside. Yet such an expectation, if anywhere entertained, would have been falsified entirely by the event. A severe political handicap was imposed upon the French squirearchy by the possession of privilege: since he paid no taxes, the noble was concerned neither with fiscal developments nor with economic conditions; and in his interventions in public affairs he necessarily appeared as a supporter of class interests. Even apart from this difficulty he was not well qualified for political leadership, for he lacked political aptitudes and possessed neither business experience nor legal knowledge. Nor was it to be expected that a third estate with its bitter memories of the selfishness and ineptitude of the feudal aristocracy would ever be willing to entrust its interests to the political leadership of men of gentle birth.

Great and small, the members of the nobility were nearly all in straitened circumstances when Francis I mounted the throne, a general impoverishment of the class having been

produced by a variety of causes. In the struggle with the Crown they had lost the judicial dues and rights which once had formed a substantial part of their revenues; for not only had the King removed from noble hands the most lucrative part of the judicial machine, but the seigneur, being no longer allowed to exercise in person such judicial authority as he retained, was also obliged to employ a professional judge, whose salary made a big hole in the profits, when it did not wholly swamp them. The operation of the inheritance laws had dismembered his fiefs, and nearly all noble patrimonies had been cut up by family partitions and subinfeudations. At the same time the economic value of the patrimony had undergone a great reduction. No longer was it peopled by serfs, *taillables et corvéables à volonté*, whom the lord might exploit at his pleasure, whilst the reliefs and services due from vassals had been considerably lowered or entirely abolished. Whereas suzerainty had thus become largely a matter of ceremony, ownership had as largely ceased to be a source of profit: agriculture had wellnigh foundered during a century of warfare and disturbance, impecunious landlords had been unable to restore their derelict properties, and rents and dues, if paid at all, were paid at derisory rates. Wealthy though he was generally reputed to be, even so great a lord as Alain d'Albret was always hard up, his servants' wages being in arrear, his children's marriage portions unpaid, his plate and jewellery pawned, his lands sold or pledged. In the ordinary way a country gentleman might be considered to be rich with an income which a prosperous merchant would have despised and a successful tradesman would not have envied. In Languedoc in the first quarter of the sixteenth century a gentleman with an income of 4,000*l.t.* was amongst the very rich; of the two thousand gentlemen in the province scarcely five dozen had as much; in one district only two gentlemen were to be found with incomes touching the 2,000*l.t.* mark; and throughout the province there were many unhappy scions of the nobility whose paltry receipts barely enabled them to eke out a miserable subsistence.¹

¹ M. Bloch, *Les Caractères originaux de l'histoire rurale française*, pp. 107-26; P. Dognon, *Les Institutions politiques et administratives du pays de Languedoc*, *Bibliothèque Méridionale*, Series ii, vol. iv, pp. 186-94.

Financial stringency was for a gentleman the more serious in that economy was rendered wellnigh impossible by the demands of fashion and the duties incumbent upon the noble state. 'Expenditure was then regulated by a man's social position, and not, as now, by the size of his fortune. In our day men with the same means will live in the same style and give their children the same sort of upbringing, be they tradesmen, landlords, doctors, bankers, noblemen, magistrates, soldiers, merchants, or lawyers. In the fifteenth century it was not so: the burden of style, of charity, and of patronage, and the need for display, pressed more heavily on the upper classes, whilst the *bourgeois* and the peasants lived with a simplicity which made their domestic expenditure much less onerous; and with an income which would have meant affluence for a commoner the gentleman found himself in straitened circumstances.'¹ By Francis I's time the pressure of convention was made more burdensome than ever by the influence of Renaissance fashions and the prevalence of luxurious tastes. Enormous sums were lavished upon modernizing old medieval castles or building country houses in the new style, in equipping them with pictures, tapestries, and costly furniture, in buying plate and linen, and in collecting precious stones. Silks and velvets, cloth of silver and cloth of gold, damascened armour, and expensive furs were purchased recklessly, and on the Field of Cloth of Gold, as a contemporary remarked, there was many a lord who carried on his back his mills, his forests, and his ancestral acres. When Anne of Brittany married Charles VIII, her bridal gown cost 5,000 *livres*. At his sovereign's marriage with Mary Tudor the Master of the Horse wore a robe of cloth of gold, which had been fetched specially from Italy at a cost of 2,000 crowns. Upon one occasion the Duchess of Bourbon expended the sum of 14,000 *livres* upon three ruby and diamond ornaments. The Duchess was rich enough to permit herself an occasional extravagance, but the same prodigality was found in those who could ill afford it, and there is on record the case of a lord who was already in debt and yet bought for his wife a diamond which cost him 4,500 *livres*.

¹ P. Mantellier, *Histoire de la communauté des marchands fréquentant la rivière de Loire*, Société Archéologique de l'Orléanais, *Mémoires*, vol. vii, pp. 189-90.

When a gentleman got into financial difficulties, it was a hard matter for him to retrieve his fallen fortunes. Almost invariably the greater part of the productive land on his estates had been disposed of long ago by his ancestors upon perpetual tenancies: such land as remained to him he could neither himself farm profitably, because labour was too dear, nor let advantageously, because the existing state of population was not such as to provide a competitive demand.¹ He could not turn to industry or commerce, because the gentleman who stooped to engage in business suffered by 'derogation' the loss of his class privileges, and, by exposing himself to be assessed to taxation, stood to lose more than he could hope to gain. There was, indeed, an exception to the derogation rules in favour of the glass-works which, by reason of their enormous consumption of wood fuel, were necessarily established in seigneurial forests; and of this exception nobles here and there availed themselves, whilst some others built mills. But when all was said and done, the creators of glass-works and the builders of mills were few in number, and the opportunities for such enterprise were so limited as not to affect the general position, that an impoverished noble could not by his own exertions augment his shrunken revenues. Two ways of escape, and two only, were open to him, each fraught with social consequences of considerable importance: he must either marry into the rich *bourgeois* class and regild his tarnished coronet with mercantile gold, or he must seek for a patron where he had been wont to descry an enemy, present himself as a suppliant at Court, and play Danaë to the King's Zeus.

The Royal Court, as established in France towards the close of the fifteenth century, was a new thing, for there had been no Court in the Middle Ages, that which had then been called a Court being merely a political assemblage of vassals, officers, and councillors of the Crown. A Court, in the modern sense, may be said to exist when three conditions are fulfilled: the position of the King must be such that he can attract to his circle the *élite* of the whole country; that circle must be a centre of social life and of intellectual and artistic culture; and it must be a place in which the influence of women makes itself felt. These conditions obtained under

¹ Bloch, *Les Caractères originaux de l'histoire rurale française*, pp. 122-6.

Charles VIII and Louis XII, and in a still more marked degree under Francis I with his artistic tastes, his weakness for women, and the magnetic attraction which he exercised over men of birth and men of action.¹ During these reigns the first families of the French nobility sought eagerly to get their children admitted to the Households of Kings, Queens, and Royal Princes, and in an appropriate organization of her entourage Anne de Beaujeu set an example which Anne of Brittany followed. The Breton Queen was well qualified to fill the role for which she had by fortune been cast: with dignity of manner, a high standard of moral conduct, and a keen sense of what was due to her rank she combined a love of learning and a taste for luxury, studying Latin and Greek, collecting pictures, miniatures, tapestries, furniture, jewellery, and books, and surrounding herself with men of letters, painters, sculptors, and illuminators. Jean Bourdichon painted portraits of her and of Charles VIII; Jean Perréal worked for her; she employed Michel Colombe on the decoration of the tomb which she put up to her parents in the Cathedral of Nantes; and the father of Clément Marot was employed in her entourage. A *Book of Hours*, which was produced to her order and under her supervision, is famous, and must be reckoned among the finest achievements of French art in her day.²

Under Francis I the Court acquired a new pre-eminence, being organized upon a scale of magnificence of which his predecessors had never dreamed. 'A Grand Master, six Chamberlains, twelve Maîtres d'Hôtel in ordinary, seven bakers, a Grand Cup-bearer and his seven assistants, seven carvers, ten equerries, an Almoner, a Confessor, six chaplains and an organist, physicians to the number of fourteen, barbers, surgeons, and apothecaries, an astrologer, eight Pages of Honour, twenty-three Valets de Chambre, twelve butlers of the Bed-chamber and the Wardrobe, ushers, porters, drummers, and all the lower menials of the kitchens and the stables; and alongside of the domestic staff the military Household, two hundred Gentlemen of the Hôtel, two companies of Archers of the Guard, one hundred Swiss . . . in a word, more than a thousand persons attached to the

¹ Decrue de Stoutz, *La Cour de France et la société au XVI^e siècle*, pp. 3-6.

² Le Roux de Lincy, *Vie de la reine Anne de Bretagne*, vol. ii.

King without counting the independent Households of the Queen, the Queen-Mother, and other Royal ladies: such is the new organism which absolutism has created. . . . In 1485 the Household cost but 200,000 *livres*. In 1518 the King's expenses were budgeted for at over one million *livres*.¹ It is no matter for surprise that an impecunious nobility should have hastened to glean in so rich a field. To attend the King's Court was to put oneself in the way of the King's favours—for oneself a post in the Household, a commission in the Bodyguard, a Great Office, or a lucrative Governorship, for one's eldest son an opportunity to enter the military service of the Crown, for a younger child a Bishopric or an Abbey. Besides being the place in which to secure Royal favours the Court was also the centre in which political fortunes were made. 'In bygone days French history had been made everywhere, in the castles of Gascony and Languedoc, on the Breton moors, in the palaces of the Dukes of Burgundy: now all was done in the Court, . . . and the Court, not the capital, was the centre of the kingdom.'²

In the passage of the centuries a section of the third estate had achieved a separate existence under the name of the *bourgeoisie*. Originally all commoners had been on an equality, and the law had known no difference between townsman and countryman save that a man living on an estate or *villa* was known as a villein, whereas a man living in a town or burgh was known as a burgher or *bourgeois*. Though the legal status of all commoners had once been the same, the third estate had long since become divided into several well-differentiated sections, and there were immense differences in actual conditions between the *bourgeoisie* or middle class, the artisans and urban proletariat, and the peasantry of the countryside. Enriched by industry and commerce, emancipated from feudal dues, organized in corporations, possessed of municipal privileges, represented in provincial and national Estates, allied with the Crown in the struggle for power, and favoured by a generous participation in the fruits of political victory, the *bourgeoisie* had

¹ Imbart de la Tour, *Les Origines de la Réforme*, vol. i, p. 165.

² Rambaud, *Histoire de la civilisation française*, 2nd edit., vol. i, p. 502.

achieved a very notable advance.¹ They were now in the midst of a period which was bringing great prosperity to their towns, and of this prosperity the members of the class, keen, energetic, intelligent, industrious, and acquisitive, were availing themselves to the full. Alike in their private business and in the public life of their towns they had acquired an experience which had developed their powers, and, by the mere fact of that development, had paved the way for further advances. In the visits they paid to markets and fairs, in journeys to replenish stocks of materials or to dispose of surplus goods, in mercantile contacts and the vicissitudes of business life they had acquired a spirit of enterprise, self-reliance, and initiative. Experience of public life and a capacity for public affairs had come to them in the municipal assemblies, in which they managed the affairs of the town—affairs growing in scope and complexity, as the town grew in prosperity and size—and they had also been found in the larger assemblies, in which they defended their town's interests amidst the conflict of provincial jealousies and the sterner clash of the political rivalries of the whole kingdom. Municipal office, the conquest of which had been the first step in their advance, had played a part of no small importance in the contribution which it had made to the civic education of the class. To aid them in the consolidation of their position, they had the advantage of their wealth, a wealth amassed by assiduous application, preserved by native astuteness, and evidenced by the magnificence of their building, the splendour of their furniture, and the munificence of their benefactions.

A division of the third estate, the *bourgeoisie* was itself divided into two sub-sections: the larger of these comprised the members of the trading corporations, whose tendency, as we have seen, was to shut themselves off as an hereditary oligarchy; the more select comprised the occupants of judicial positions, the holders of posts in the revenue and administrative services, and the rich merchants and financiers, whose opportunities and rewards far surpassed any openings to be met with in retail trade. Legal offices and posts under the Crown were objects of desire in every *bourgeois* family, for they must at the least invest their occupants with a certain

¹ Brissaud, *A History of French Public Law*, trans. J. W. Garner, p. 306.

local consequence, and at the best they might even open a road to the highest positions in the land. The King himself was dependent upon the great merchant families, which administered his revenues and relieved his recurring necessities, whilst a host of impoverished nobles had become debtors to the banker, the money-lender, and the merchant. The reward of success was often a step up in the social scale, for no insurmountable barrier was interposed between the middle classes and their social superiors. Members of the *bourgeoisie* might, and did, enter the ranks of the nobility by occupancy of the posts which conferred that status upon the holders; or they received patents of nobility from a Crown which viewed with lively gratitude their contribution to a joint political task; or by the purchase of feudal estates they acquired nobility or put themselves in a fair way to acquire it. In the Middle Ages the land had been shared between the nobles, the Church, and the peasantry, but at their close a new claimant appeared, who came neither of the sword nor of the stole nor of the plough, but of the ledger and the yardstick. A land-hunger seized upon the newly enriched *bourgeoisie*, and they bought all sorts of land with equal eagerness, since noble fiefs satisfied their desire for social distinction, whilst farms and peasant holdings provided a profitable use for money, for which in existing economic conditions it was not easy to find elsewhere as advantageous an investment.

‘The gentleman of old family is hard up; he begins by borrowing, and mortgages his estates. But how is he to discharge the debt? At long last he must make up his mind to sell, and not merely a field or two, but one or more seigneuries, parting with them either to the creditor himself or to some other purchaser, whose cash will serve to extinguish the most pressing liabilities. What is the new owner’s social origin? To ask this is tantamount to asking where the money is. *Château*, front pew in the parish church, the gallows, denoting the possession of judicial powers, *cens*, *tailles*, *droits de mainmorte*, all the honours and all the profits of the old hierarchical system go in nearly every instance to swell the patrimony and the prestige of some one of *bourgeois* origin, whose fortune has been made in some trade or profession, and who, already ennobled or on the verge of ennoblement, blooms forth as a seigneur. All round Lyons, for example, and as far

as Forez, Beaujolais, and Dauphiné, baronies and *châtellenies* and all sorts of fiefs were accumulated in the hands of the great patrician families of Lyons, enriched by shopkeeping, the cloth trade, mining, or banking, some of them by birth French, such as the Camus, the Laurencins, the Vinols, and the Vareys, some Italian, such as the Gadagnes and the Gondis, and some German, like the Clébergs. Out of forty seigneuries sold by the Constable of Bourbon or dealt with after the confiscation of his estates three only were acquired by members of old noble families. Tradition has it—whether rightly or wrongly does not much matter—that the money-changer, Claude Laurencin, the son of a draper and grandson of an innkeeper, had the utmost difficulty in getting homage rendered by his new vassals in the barony he had bought from Louis XI's daughter. Be that as it may, his wife would still be one of the Queen's ladies and his son the First Almoner of the King. The seignorial régime as such suffered no injury; nay rather, it would soon display a new vigour; but seignorial estates in a large measure changed hands. . . . And the new men had a new outlook. These tradesmen, these farmers of the revenues, these men who lent money to kings and grandees, were wont to bring care, craft, and pluck to the management of their affairs. In taking the place of the landlord they did not change their mental processes or their ambitions. They brought something to the management of their new possessions; their example taught something to such of the old nobility as had chanced to retain their inherited wealth; their daughters, whose well-filled hands were sought by gentlemen out at elbows, brought something into the old families, where the patrimony was often saved by some woman of genius: this something was the business mind, used to reckoning profit and loss, capable on occasion of risking a temporarily unfruitful expenditure for the sake of a prospective gain—in a word, the capitalist mentality.¹

Apart from the *bourgeoisie* the condition of the rest of the urban population was not such as to suggest that social progress had resulted from economic prosperity. In examining the operation of the craft guilds we have seen how the

¹ M. Bloch, *Les Caractères originaux de l'histoire rurale française*, pp. 129-31.

position of the workman was altering for the worse with the gradual decay of the old ideals, with the substitution in the minds of the masters of a petty and selfish jealousy for the patriarchal friendliness of a simpler age, and with a corresponding change in the temper of the men from a spirit of contented obedience to a bitter mood of insubordinate antipathy. With the pathway to promotion closed against him by the exclusive policy of the guilds the workman found himself condemned irrevocably to a drab life of toil, in which he must perform tasks that were often arduous, work for hours that were invariably long, submit to be poorly fed, poorly clad, and poorly lodged, and, lacking an assurance of regular employment, subsist anxiously on the edge of poverty. His discontent was increased by an embittering conviction that the hands of all men were against him. Kept down by employers for fear of competition in trade and shortage in the labour market, he was suspect both to the Church for the questionable practices of the *compagnonnage* ritual and to the Crown as a possible element of social disorder. For this reason the fiscal system was used against him as an instrument of repression, the *taille*, which bore upon the country districts, being reduced at the expense of the *aides*, which pressed upon the towns in the shape of duties upon all the necessities of life. The result was that in the towns the cost of living had been steadily rising, and the rise was about to be accentuated by the monetary revolution, which would greatly reduce the purchasing-power of wages. The outlook for labour would then be indeed dark. Guild policy denied the workman a certainty of employment; corporate regulations rigorously deprived him of the right to work on his own account; and the State prohibited him from taking concerted action to redress his grievances or to agitate for the improvement of his lot. Finding it increasingly hard to earn a living, he tended more and more to swell the mass of floating labour, which wandered from town to town, a social menace and an economic reproach. In this vagrancy he enjoyed, it is true, the support of his *compagnonnages*, which welcomed him on arrival, put him in the way of finding a job, and looked after him till a job was found; but, as work grew scarcer, pay worse, and the mass of floating labour larger, he drew ever nearer to the abyss, in which the unemployed and the

unemployable lived uncared for in squalid misery, the degraded and hopeless occupants of malodorous and pestilential slums. A growing procession of men in search of work, and the frequency of legislative enactments directed against vagabonds and beggars, indicate the emergence of a social problem fraught with possibilities of social disturbance. The problem of pauperism is never easy to handle. In France at the beginning of the sixteenth century it was the more obstinate and the more menacing in that the charitable institutions inherited from the past were decadent or corrupt, that there were no other agencies for the relief of distress, and that as a consequence of the moral deterioration which invariably attends upon hunger, misery, and ignorance there was an alarming increase in drunkenness, vice, and crimes of violence among the coarse and brutal denizens of the slums.

Scenes of commercial and industrial bustle and stir, centres of the manifold activities of the craft guilds, places of abode of wealthy merchants, bankers, financiers, and lawyers, the towns played an important part; but it was nevertheless upon the land that the economic structure was founded and in the rural population that the mainstays of that structure were to be sought. How far the rural population outnumbered the inhabitants of the towns may be gauged by the circumstance that of the twenty-seven thousand parishes in the kingdom more than twenty thousand possessed a rural character. Thus the rural population was by far the largest numerically of all the sections of French society. Like that of the towns, it was composed of various elements, differing greatly from one another in their social conditions and modes of life. There were serfs; there were farm labourers; there was a large class of small-holder, who usually supplemented his receipts by doing paid work for the squire or the neighbouring farmer; and there were some prosperous cultivators of the soil, whose position resembled that of the English yeoman farmer. Into the composition of these sections and the material conditions of their life we must look with some particularity.

In the early Middle Ages serfdom had been the normal condition of the rural population. Attached, not to the

person of a master, but to the land which he tilled, and capable of owning real and personal property, the serf was not a slave, but he could be compelled to come back, should he run away, he could in theory be taxed at the pleasure of the lord, he could not without permission marry outside the seigneurie or with a free woman, and he could not sell the land he cultivated or leave his possessions to any but his children. In many respects his position had improved by the beginning of the sixteenth century. No longer was he *taillable et corvéable à merci*, for with the passage of the centuries the seigneurial *taille* had been converted into a regular tax, and the seigneurial *corvées* had become restricted to a defined demand for unremunerated service. That demand was upon the whole moderate, though some *corvées*, such as beating the lord's ponds to keep the frogs quiet, being designed to denote the serf's subjection, carried with them the stigma of a personal humiliation. Of the subsisting disabilities of serfdom the most important was that known as *mainmorte*: the land which the serf received from the lord continued to belong to the lord; the serf could hold it only for life; he could not sell it; and it was not hereditary, so that the children, if permitted to inherit, could be compelled to pay an inheritance tax. Thus, though the full rigours of the old serfdom had been softened, there was a great difference in civil rights between the provinces enjoying *coutumes franches*, in which liberty and civil equality were regarded as fundamental principles, and districts subject to *coutumes serves*, which imposed upon the peasant the burdens and disabilities of the servile status.

Serfs had gained their freedom in large numbers during the thirteenth century, when there had been a widespread movement for emancipation; and the second half of the fifteenth century had been another period of general enfranchisement. In conferring liberty upon their serfs the lords were actuated by a variety of motives, some of them altruistic and religious, and some purely selfish. With the progress of civilization the moral basis of the institution had begun to be called into question, and doubts were entertained whether it were proper that men should be held in bondage. A more potent lever was provided by the perception that serfdom did not pay. In the first place, a lord was

able to exact dues upon a grant of freedom, and the immediate advantage of these cash payments was by many deemed to outweigh the somewhat problematical benefit of a theoretical power to tax. Then to fiscal gain was added economic advantage, for the free man, working for his own benefit at least in part, worked better than the serf, and emancipation operated to attract such labour to land which stood in urgent need of it. Thus by the end of the fifteenth century serfdom had ceased to exist in many districts, and notably throughout the Royal demesne. *Coutumes serves*, so far as they still subsisted, were found for the most part in the demesnes which had been granted out in appanage and upon the old feudal estates. There were still serfs in Champagne, Berry, Auvergne, Bourbonnais, and Nivernais, and the most rigorous *mainmorte* was maintained in Burgundy. On the whole, however, serfdom had become so far exceptional as to have but little importance in an estimate of social conditions.

Of the free population of the country districts the great majority were either farm servants and farm labourers or small-holders combining with the cultivation of their land the doing of occasional work for a wage. Servants and labourers in permanent employment were not numerous, for farms were usually small, the families of farmers were generally large, and the farmer's engagement of paid labour was usually confined to the enlistment of additional assistance at times of pressure. Wage-rates were on the face of it high, though it has to be remembered that the earning capacity of the labourer was adversely affected by enforced abstinence from toil on Sundays and feast-days, whereby he was prevented from earning a wage on some hundred or more days in the year. 'Never during the Middle Ages', says an economic historian, 'had the wages of the agricultural labourer been as high as they were during the last quarter of the fifteenth century, and never during the centuries to come would they be as high again. From this point of view the end of the nineteenth century can scarcely bear comparison with the reigns of Louis XI and Charles VIII. . . . The fifteenth century, when land was almost worthless, was a very advantageous period for wage-earners. To arrive at the respective values of work and of land, let us compare the mean yield of the *hectare* with a workman's pay. In the thirteenth

century . . . the villein's annual earnings corresponded with the annual yield of from six to ten *hectares* or thereabouts. In the fourteenth century he earned in 1301-25 a sum equivalent to the yield of seven and a half *hectares*, then in 1326-50 of nineteen *hectares*, and afterwards of twenty-seven *hectares*; and finally, in the fifteenth century he with his 250 days' wages is as well off as the owner of thirty-two *hectares*. This state of affairs does not, it is true, last for long: the labourer earns only as much as the yield of nineteen *hectares* at the beginning of the sixteenth century, of fifteen *hectares* in 1550, and of nine and a half *hectares* in 1600.¹

For the small-holder, who did not live primarily by wages, and for the men who cultivated the larger farms, the economic conditions of the period were in many respects favourable. They enjoyed security of tenure, they paid rents which the change in the value of money had made more or less nominal, and the burden of feudal dues was very considerably reduced. The condition of agriculture, if a hindrance to enterprise, was favourable to routine, and gave the small man a fair chance, for no great capital outlay was required for the tillage of land in primitive simplicity. The King was a friend and a protector: the peasant could not be fleeced by the lord, because the King did not allow it; nor could he be bullied, seeing that the King's courts were attentive to his complaints. Since Louis XI's time the King had favoured him by a fiscal policy, of which the first object was the reduction of the taxation leviable in the country districts. The King had begun, too, to recognize that the peasant had political rights by calling him to participate in the national councils; in the States-General of Tours he had been represented for the first time in history, and since then he had been given a share in the work of customary codification. Since expanding trade and rising prices were to his advantage, it is not surprising to learn that he was sometimes comfortably off and occasionally even rich. As soon as he began to prosper, he took to farming taxes, tolls, and tithes, to dealing in cattle and corn, to lending money, and to speculating in land. A very considerable amount of real estate was in the

¹ Vicomte G. d'Avenel, *Histoire économique de la propriété, des salaires, des denrées et de tous les prix*, vol. iii, pp. 38-42.

hands of peasants or of men who came of peasant stock. Thus from a Provençal terrier, which records the situation of fifty-four heads of families in the last decade of the fifteenth century, we learn that all but seven were owners of property. Three had as much as from twenty to thirty parcels of land; ten had anything up to a score of parcels; and of the rest all had something. One man had three houses of his own, a half share in a fourth house, a sheep-fold, a stable, and thirty-seven pieces of land. Another, a stock-raiser, had a house, a mill, three sheep-folds, sixty-three pieces of arable land, nineteen meadows, eight vineyards, nine plots of garden ground, five olive-groves—in all more than one hundred parcels.¹ From such men were drawn the large farmers, who possessed teams of horses or oxen, and cultivated extensive holdings. It was of them, perhaps, that the author was thinking when a picture of a peasantry prosperous, contented, and gay was painted by Noël du Fail, a Breton landowner and magistrate, whose *Propos rustiques*, though not published till the end of Francis I's reign, had been written many years before.

It would be a mistake to suppose that the condition of the average rural inhabitant approached to a state of comfortable ease. A general distribution of land, necessary as a bait to attract labour to deserted estates, had made of the free peasant a small-holder, and with his strips of arable land, his cottage, his garden, his chickens, and his pigs he knew the joys of ownership and the satisfaction of feeling that he was working for his own benefit. Market conditions were favourable to him; his products were in demand in the expanding towns, and the prices which could be obtained for them were steadily rising. Assuredly he was now much better off than in the old days of feudal oppression or during the black misery of the Hundred Years' War. Judged by modern standards, however, his advance did not seem to be very satisfying. Lacking a plough and the means to purchase or hire one, and armed with ineffective tools, he could cultivate his ground only by laborious manual toil, and, since its yield was insufficient for his sustenance, he must also go out and work for others for reward. Ill nourished, ignorant, unenter-

¹ Charles de Ribbe, *La Société provençale à la fin du moyen âge*, pp. 381-2.

prising, thriftless, intemperate, and quarrelsome, he lived a life of squalor under an incessant menace of annihilation by famine or plague. The main weakness of his position was that he had no money, and that without money he found it difficult to tide over lean periods and still more difficult to exist at all through periods made barren by bad harvests or other misfortunes. Apart from this danger, he was constantly harassed by lack of cash in the new economic conditions which affected him in common with the rest of the world. On top of the old dues to the feudal lord he had to pay taxes to the State and tithes to the Church, whilst in a world of growing economic complexity he could no longer subsist on what he grew and satisfy by barter his simple needs. 'Now his hand must be incessantly in his pocket, to satisfy the demands of the tax-collector, the landlord, and the tradesman, without whose goods he could no longer exist. True, he still had his produce, but, to get cash, he must sell it, and, to sell it to advantage, he needed resources and aptitudes in which he was wholly deficient. The alternatives were to get paid work or borrow. He borrowed—money, or seed, or cattle—on the security of his land and crops, and invariably on the most onerous terms. When once he was caught in the toils of indebtedness, the fate of his holding was sealed.'¹ Yet, if the shadow of the money-lender darkened the rural landscape, there were rays of sunshine which pierced the clouds. It was no small thing for the peasant to have become a free man and to be the owner of property in a well-ordered State, and the gratitude which Gringore put into the mouth of the French people may be taken to be a true expression of the sentiment which prevailed amid the toiling masses of rural France.

I live in good peace, by no evils distraught;
I pay all my taxes and owe no man aught;
I've victuals enough and, thank Heaven, to spare;
If discord arises or battles are fought,
'Tis far from my home. . . .

My portion in quiet I eat, and proclaim
'My house is my castle'. If any man press

¹ M. Bloch, *Les Caractères originaux de l'histoire rurale française*, pp. 145-6 (abridged).

Within it to wrong me or cause me a shame,
 Then up rises Justice, to all men the same,
 My rights to establish, my wrongs to redress.¹

The material condition of the peasant was in accord with his economic position, his housing, his clothing, and his food furnishing him with the necessities, but with no more than the necessities, of existence. There were three types of peasant dwelling. In districts in which granite was plentiful, blocks of it were used to erect a coarsely built structure; in this a low ground floor served as cellar, store-house, hen-house, and pigsty; above was a single living-room with a ceiling of beams and joists; and under the roof was a loft. Where building-materials were scarce, the peasant lived in an excavated den, the floor of which was well below ground-level and the thatched roof not much above it. In the third and most common type the walls were either built of mud or clay or they consisted of a framework of lathes with the interstices stopped with hay or straw; the one low room had a floor of stone or earth; and except in proximity to slate-quarries the roof was of thatch or wooden shingles. The door was kept shut with a wooden pin, and over the door was a shutter, which could be opened. As a rule this shutter provided the only source of light, for windows were uncommon; when provided, they were narrow, unglazed slits, filled sometimes with oiled paper or parchment, and sometimes with hay. Only in buildings of the better sort was there a chimney, the usual practice being to burn a fire of peat or wood on dogs in the middle of the room and to allow the smoke to escape through a hole in the roof. In peasant dwellings a

¹ Pierre Gringore, *Œuvres complètes*, ed. C. d'Héricault and A. de Montaignon, vol. i, pp. 244, 246:

Je suis en paix, ame ne me travaille;
 Competamment je paye subside et taille;
 J'ay des vivres, la mercy dieu, assez;
 Et s'il y a discord, noise, bataille,
 C'est loin de moy . . .

Il est certain que mangeus ma pitance
 En paix, sans bruit. Se on vient en ma maison
 Pour me faire desplaisir, sans doubtance
 Incontinent la justice se avance
 De m'en faire le droit et la raison.

part of the building was usually devoted to the storage of grain and hay, and another part to the accommodation of live stock, which were separated from the living-room of the family by nothing more substantial than a flimsy partition. Round the outside of the dwelling pools of putrid water alternated with heaps of dung.

In these small, dark, damp, cold, and foul hovels there were few comforts. A table, a dresser, and a kneading-trough were sometimes the sum total of the peasant's domestic equipment. The bed, if he had one, seldom had a mattress, being made up with straw or hay. In most cottages there were a cooking-pot, a hook to withdraw it from the fire, a corn-bin, a table, and a seat, the seat being a coffer, and acting as the sole receptacle for clothes and other possessions. Such cups and platters as were owned were of earthenware or wood. A lantern, a wash-tub, a bucket, a handmill for grinding corn, a ladder, and a few tools were added to the stock of possessions, when a man's circumstances warranted additional expenditure. The dietary matched the equipment, being planned upon the same penurious scale. A bread of barley or rye was the staple food, and water was the main drink. The bread was sometimes soaked in a vegetable soup and sometimes eaten with cheese, whilst in good times salt fish, pork, bacon, and eggs brought variety to the table. Butcher's meat and poultry were scarcely ever eaten, and wine, beer, and cider were indulgences for special occasions. In lean times life was supported on oatmeal, beans, and chestnuts, and in periods of acute shortage upon roots, herbs, and dead animals. The dietary of the poorer town dweller was much the same. He, too, eat meat and poultry, and drank wine, only on great occasions, his normal nutriment consisting of rye or barley bread soaked in a thin soup, a salad of beans and onions mixed with vinegar and oil, salt fish on fast-days and during Lent, and pork or bacon with eggs as an occasional and unusual indulgence.¹

In the homes of the farmers and other better-to-do peasants a much higher standard of comfort prevailed. Food

¹ Fagniez, *L'Économie sociale de la France sous Henri IV*, pp. 58-9; Joubert, *Étude sur la vie privée au xv^e siècle en Anjou*, pp. 57-8; H. Sée, *Les Classes rurales et le régime domaniale en France au moyen âge*, pp. 458-61, 466-7, 543-7.

was good and varied, clothing not stinted, and furniture simple, indeed, since it came from the hands of the village joiner, but amply sufficient for all reasonable needs. In homes of this sort were found an abundance of utensils, much linen, plenty of pewter, some plate, and a certain amount of jewellery. The bed and its appurtenances were usually a part of the dowry of the bride, and comprised two or three pairs of sheets, some blankets, a mattress, a bolster, and a pillow. To air the bed, warming-pans of copper or iron were frequently used. Other pieces of furniture were a table on trestles or legs, stools or forms, and bins or chests disposed along the walls. If there was a dresser, the pewter was displayed on it. Chairs with backs were sometimes found, but they were not common; nor were cupboards often seen in any but *bourgeois* homes. Knives were in use, and in some houses there was a grindstone for sharpening them; spoons were less common, being regarded as luxuries. Bowls and dishes were of pewter; tumblers could be had, but owing to their fragility there was a preference for goblets and tankards of metal or horn. Linen was plentiful, and in addition to sheets there were table-cloths, napkins, dusters, and dish-cloths in most houses. There was no carpet, the floor being bare in summer and covered with rushes or hay in the winter. Candles were a luxury, lighting being by hanging lamps, which were utterly inefficient and gave a minimum of illumination to the accompaniment of a maximum of smoke and smell. The stock of utensils and domestic accessories was generally large and varied, comprising as it did a turnspit, a trivet for saucepans and pots, a gridiron, frying-pans, kettles, a shovel, a pair of bellows, a pitcher or two, a pestle and mortar, occasionally a chafing-dish, and always earthenware receptacles for water, vinegar, oil, and wine. A plentiful and wholesome diet was based upon bacon and pork, poultry and fish, eggs, cheese, fruit, raisins, and nuts, with much use of condiments and spices and a generous allowance of wine.¹

Between these well-provided rustic homes and those of the poorer country gentlemen there was no very marked differ-

¹ Latouche, *La Vie en Bas-Quercy du XIV^e au XVIII^e siècle*, Bibliothèque Méridionale, Series II, vol. xix, pp. 396-419; Bezard, *La Vie rurale dans le sud de la région parisienne de 1450 à 1560*, pp. 223-4.

ence. The typical squire liked to be distinguished from his humbler neighbours by the possession of some plate, a little jewellery, a few tapestries, a more fashionable wardrobe, a stable, and a kennel, but he had made no startling departure from the rustic simplicity which had characterized the mode of life of his forebears for many generations past. His manor-house was a small and modest building, in which, as in a farm, the windows of the living-rooms looked out on to stables, kennels, barns, and farm-yard. But whilst many of the poorer nobles lived in unpretentious style, already among the wealthier sections of the nobility and in the homes of the rich *bourgeoisie* great changes were being introduced by the example of Italy and the spread of Renaissance fashions. In these classes luxurious habits and a taste for good living were becoming so general and were being carried so far that Italians themselves would soon be astonished by French luxury and extravagance. Dainty town houses and elegant country *châteaux* were taking the place of the dark mansions and sombre keeps of medieval days, a work of construction or renovation being carried on vigorously all over the country such as is exemplified at Amboise and Blois, at Chaumont and Chambord, at Anet and Azay-le-Rideau. A new elegance and a new magnificence characterized these products of the new architecture with their delicate harmonies of brick and stone, their light and spacious rooms, their carving and paneling, their painted ceilings, rich mantelpieces, and mosaic floors. The clumsy cupboards, iron-bound chests, simple settles and stools, and other heavy furniture of a ruder age were being displaced to make way for pieces in ivory, ebony, marqueterie, and exotic woods, varied in form, graceful in design, and dainty in shape. There were pictures and statues, tapestries and silk hangings, embossed leather, and books, whilst delicate glass, enamelled faience, and handsomely ornamented plate took the place of the pewter which had served the needs of an earlier age.

The new splendour of the home and its appointments was matched by a new sumptuousness in dress: silks and satins, velvets and brocades, damasks and embroideries, cloth of silver and cloth of gold, and rich but dainty jewellery took the place of the sombre costume and massive ornaments formerly in vogue. Most marked among the rich, the desire

for adornment infected all classes, the gentleman, it was said, endeavouring to turn himself out like a prince, the *bourgeois* like a gentleman, and the common man like a *bourgeois*; there was a profuse expenditure upon costly materials of foreign origin; and the effect upon the country's metallic stocks was, or was believed to be, such that the Government was periodically frightened into imposing upon the follies of fashion the not very efficient restraint of sumptuary legislation. A notable trend of fashion was discernible in the great popularity of fine linen and in the habit of ornamenting with gold thread and silks pieces in domestic use and the linen parts of female attire. The chemise was usually of batiste trimmed with lace, and drawers also were very elaborate. At the end of the fifteenth century there was a movement among the upper classes to generalize the use of the handkerchief, and four dozen of these articles were comprised in the trousseau prepared for Anne of Brittany upon her marriage to Charles VIII. Richly ornamented pillow-cases were among the possessions of Margaret of Austria, to whom Charles had once been betrothed.¹

Then, as now, the aid of chemistry was invoked in beauty culture, though discreetly in the privacy of the home, and not wantonly under the eyes of the quarry. Dyes to colour the hair, cosmetics for the skin, pomades for the lips, powders for the teeth, perfumes and depilatory pastes were the stock-in-trade of the woman of fashion, whose dressing-room was said by affronted moralists to resemble a chemist's shop. Scents were very popular, and powders, musk, amber, and essences of orange-blossom, of rose, and of rosemary were much used. Linen was put away with sachets to sweeten it, and in Brantôme's time a nobleman would go so far as to perfume the trappings of his horse. Perfumes were also used hygienically, being believed to possess disinfectant properties and to ward off such diseases as the plague. That medical science did not always disdain to make its profit out of female foibles may be deduced from the action of a Professor of the Faculty of Medicine of Paris, who published a treatise on female adornment, in which he gave receipts for bleaching the hair, for promoting its luxuriance, and for concocting

¹ Pigeonneau, *Histoire du commerce de la France*, vol. ii, pp. 23-8; A. Franklin, *La Vie privée d'autrefois*, vol. xx, 'Les Magasins de nouveautés', p. 68.

perfumes and pomades. He professed to be able to restore to the face the fresh beauty of early youth. 'Take one dozen new-laid hen's eggs', was his specific, 'with one ounce of fine cinnamon and twelve ounces of asses' milk; mix thoroughly, and distil in a glass alembic; then wash the face with the resultant fluid.' Having profited by this instruction, the fair reader might then turn to the pages of another work, doubtless every whit as trustworthy, since it was prominent among the 'best sellers' of the time: here she would find an author generously disclosing a 'marvellous secret' which he had guarded jealously for many years, and would learn from him how Moorish women were enabled to prevent the growth of hair under the arms.¹

In an age nowhere characterized by temperance in the use of food and drink the profusion displayed by the French table was such as to elicit comment from all foreign visitors. The country, said one of them, being rich in woods, pastures, and corn lands, grew excellent fat beasts, from which were got mutton, which was the best of all, beef, which was good, though not so good as the English, and veal, which was plentiful and cheap. Pork was despised; it was the dish of the poor man. Roebuck and lamb were liked, but were both tough. The hare and the young boar took rank as delicacies above the partridge and the pheasant. Venison was abundant but coarse, and big game was not much eaten. Meat was nearly always sold by the joint, not by the pound, and the price was low. Fish was neither as good nor as plentiful as it ought to have been, seeing that the country had many rivers and a long coast-line, so that all districts might have been supplied with ease. Fish from the sea was preferred to fish taken in fresh water; sole, salmon, and sturgeon were caught in the mouths of the Loire and the Seine, and turbot and oysters were to be had nearly all the year round. Salt herrings were brought in great quantities from the Low Countries and the western isles; they came by the ship-load, and the Paris shops were full of them. Since oils were always strong and rancid, practically all cooking was done with butter. Fresh butter and other dairy produce were consumed pretty generally, and there were plenty of vegetables, especially peas, white

¹ Franklin, *La Vie privée d'autrefois*, vol. xvi, 'Les Magasins de nouveautés', pp. 16-22, 33-49.

and green, lentils, and some, though not many, beans. Rice, cleaned barley, and Italian cheeses were all very dear. In spite of the abundance of cattle and milk the French were no good at cheese-making. In France, said another traveller, the soups, the pasties, and the cakes were all good. Veal was good as a rule, and the mutton still better, a shoulder of mutton roast with small onions, as served all over the kingdom, being as delicious a dish as could anywhere be found. The supply of game was good, and partridges, pheasants, pea-fowl, rabbits, chickens, and capons were plentiful, cheap, and very nicely served.¹

In the hours at which meals were taken there was no regularity, the rich man, as was said, eating when he felt an inclination and the poor man when he got the chance. Before the meal it was customary to rinse the hands in perfumed water, and at its beginning grace was said by an ecclesiastic, if present, and, failing him, by a child. That being done, a napkin was tied round the neck, and the meal proceeded. Since table-silver and cutlery were much less plentiful than they have since become, it was inevitable that much less use should be made of them in eating. Spoons were used for soups and liquid dishes; knives were few, and were passed from hand to hand; and the fingers were used in place of forks, which were not provided, or, if provided, were used only for eating fruit. So unusual was the employment of the fork that even at princely tables the carver was equipped merely with a knife, and held the joint with his hand. A recognized code of table-manners was adapted to these conditions. Politeness required that a man should help himself, not grossly, with both hands at once, but delicately, with a few fingers of one hand; that he should not keep his hand in the dish too long, or insert it when another person was in prior possession; that he should not put into the dish a hand that was not clean, nor use for taking food the hand with which he scratched himself or blew his nose; that he should have recourse to the table-cloth or a napkin, when he wanted to clean his fingers, and not lick them or wipe them on his coat; that he should clean his teeth decently with a toothpick rather than with a knife or a napkin or the finger-nail; and

¹ Tommaseo, *Relations des ambassadeurs vénitiens*, vol. ii, pp. 570-6; Antonio de Beatis, *Voyage du Cardinal d'Aragon (1517-18)*, p. 255.

finally, if he aspired to the acme of refinement, that he should refrain from licking his plate. One or two of the customs of the time may be mentioned for their bearing upon usages or expressions prevalent in our own day. For example, when a health was to be drunk, a piece of toast was put in the bottom of a glass or cup, which passed from hand to hand till it reached the person being honoured, who finished the drink and eat the toast, and thus was 'toasted'. Lack of corks and the scarcity of glass bottles accounted for the fact that, when wine was drunk, it was usually consumed in over-large quantities, for in the absence of corked bottles it was necessary to broach some capacious receptacle, and forthwith to consume its contents, if they were not to be left to spoil. When bottles were used, the liquids in them were kept air-tight by pouring a thin layer of oil into the neck of the bottle, and from this circumstance arose the custom of pouring a small quantity of liquor into a glass before circulating the bottle.¹

From a description of the home I turn to a consideration of its environment, and attempt to sketch the condition of the medieval town. It is to be noted first that these towns were for the most part quite small,² there being as yet in France no exceptions to that rule but Paris, Rouen, and Lyons, and even Paris being still confined within the walls with which it had been girdled by Philip Augustus and Charles V. These walls, 27 feet high, about 9 feet thick, and equipped with towers at intervals of some 200 yards, had afforded adequate protection in earlier days, but in 1515 they were in a condition which caused some misgiving. Speculation about the number of the city's inhabitants is hampered by the usual lack of dependable statistics. Estimates, in which no great reliance can be placed, put the number of streets at 300 or 400, the number of houses at 8,000 or 10,000, and the number of inhabitants at 300,000 or 400,000 at the least. Numerous though the houses had become, they were

¹ Franklin, *Paris et les parisiens au seizième siècle*, pp. 356-67, 379, 386, 414, and *La Vie privée d'autrefois*, vol. vi, 'Les Repas', pp. 46-8, 51-2, 212; Delavaud, 'Le Commerce des vins et du sel en Norvège au moyen âge', *Revue de l'Institut de Sociologie*, 1929, p. 109.

² 'Les "bonnes villes" du moyen âge les plus célèbres sont des bourgades de 8 à 15,000 habitants, sauf Rouen, qui eut peut-être 40,000 âmes': F. Lot, 'L'État des paroisses', *Bibliothèque de l'École des Chartes*, vol. xc, 1929, p. 300.

still distinguished from one another only by signs, the system of differentiation by numbers being nowhere employed except upon the new shops on the Pont-Notre-Dame, and even there the numbers were repeated upon the two sides of the bridge. That the French capital was not without its blemishes will presently appear, but that it was nevertheless of a quality to pass the severe test of Italian appraisal is revealed by the commendation which a Venetian ambassador would bestow upon it not long after Francis I's accession. 'Paris', wrote Andrea Navagero, 'is a very large, beautiful, rich, and populous city; alone, in my opinion, is it fit to compare with Venice; indeed, it is much more populous, and has many more shops and much more trade. . . . The streets are fine, and the shops numerous and marvellously rich. Many of the houses are good ones, though not externally impressive. There is an infinite number of wealthy merchants, and of gentry there are not a few. Here is the seat of the Parlement, which accounts for the town being so much frequented; here, too, is the University with its numerous students; and so it is that, even when the King and his Court arrive, the place seems to be no more crowded than before. And yet, strange to say, everything is cheap despite the numbers of people, and there is greater abundance here, perhaps, than anywhere else in France. . . . The country round about, besides being very pretty, is fertile and rich; the Seine and its affluents bring wine, foodstuffs, and other commodities; and the river affords communication with the sea, which permits of the importation of what you will. Thus the abundance which reigns in the city ceases to be marvellous when one considers the advantages of the situation and the industry of the people. . . . Paris is, in truth, beyond my powers of description, and I can best end by saying that no city in Europe is as large or as fine.'¹

As with private houses, so with the towns, a new standard of beauty and comfort was demanded by the new aesthetic perceptions of the age and by the new appreciation of decency and order born of the Renaissance spirit and nurtured in the gentle climate of prosperity and peace. In many French cities town halls were now embellished or rebuilt,

¹ Tommaseo, *Relations des ambassadeurs vénitiens*, vol. i, pp. 30-3; Franklin, *Paris et les parisiens au seizième siècle*, pp. 1-4, 8, 19-20.

imposing law-courts were reared, streets were widened and paved, fountains were set up, markets were redesigned, slaughter-houses were removed to a convenient distance, eyesores were abolished, and obstructions were cleared away. There was ample scope for the reformer's zeal. Picturesque the medieval town may have been, but almost invariably it was dark, inconvenient, and insanitary. Streets were very narrow, having been planned to meet the needs, not of vehicular traffic, but merely of the cavalier, the pack-horse, and the foot-passenger, and above the thoroughfare the widely projecting fronts of the houses closed in, shutting out light and air. Such space as there was—and it was little enough—was encumbered by awnings and shop-signs, by stalls and counters, by boxes and barrows, by the obstructive presence of street hawkers vending their wares, of fripperers repairing old clothes, of tinkers patching pots and pans, and by the leisurely circulation of public and private criers. In Paris the press was so great as to cause alarm to foreign visitors, who were persuaded that a man could not venture into such crowded streets without taking his life in his hand. By night there were dangers of another sort, making it inexpedient to go abroad without an armed escort, for police protection was lacking, and street-lighting was the dim, infrequent, and casual illumination bequeathed by a distant past. It was true that in Louis XI's time an attempt had been made to foist upon the shoulders of the private householder the burden of a service which the public authority had failed to provide, an order then being issued that a light should be kept burning in one window of each abode; but that order, whether or no because it had been resented, had been pretty generally ignored.

Had the order been obeyed, it might well have conduced to the onset of another and more deadly peril, for amid the huddled warrens of shoddy wooden structures the risk of fire was a menace which the obligatory provision of buckets of water beside the door-step did little to ward off. The capital had upon the whole enjoyed an undeservedly fortunate immunity, but in many provincial towns the local annals were a tale of incessant conflagration. Thus in the town of Bourges fires to the number of seven at the least had already set their mark upon the place when on a Sunday evening in

July 1487 a blaze, breaking out in the house of a joiner, was fanned by a high wind into a raging conflagration, in which churches, abbeys, the town hall with its archives, all the public markets, and the whole commercial quarter perished, and a material loss was inflicted upon the town, from which a full recovery was never made. At Troyes the year 1524 beheld the destruction of the richest quarter of the town, including two churches, two religious houses, two town gates, the belfry, and the armoury; and ere the traces of that disaster had been effaced, a fire starting in a tannery consumed another five dozen dwellings. The story of similar visitations and the same sad tale of havoc and loss were told in the annals of most of the towns in the kingdom: all lay at the mercy of carelessness or intoxication, and were the too readily inflammable prey of the overturned light, the smouldering beam, or the unnoticed spark.¹

Terrible though they were, the devouring flames were not so much to be dreaded as the spectre of mortal disease which lurked in every human contact and skulked invisible upon the contaminated air. Mankind was a constant prey to typhoidal illnesses, dysentery, small-pox, and measles, all of which were endemic, and all deadly, especially to the young; nor was the dreaded plague ever absent for long. No reliance could be placed in medical attention, for doctors were few in number and lamentably deficient in knowledge and skill. Had their competence been much greater than it was, it would have been no easy matter to arrest mortality in physical conditions which favoured infection and minimized the power of resistance. Food was unwholesome, the diet of the bulk of the population being characterized by an excessive consumption of stale fish and a highly deleterious shortage of fresh vegetables, whilst it was quite common for drinking-water to be drawn from a polluted river and to be dangerously impure. Though personal cleanliness was not wholly disregarded, as is shown by the prevalence and popularity of bathing-establishments, the attention paid to it was not so thorough as to discourage the presence of swarms of parasites,

¹ Franklin, *Paris et les parisiens au seizième siècle*, pp. 44-5; Antonio de Beatis, *Voyage du Cardinal d'Aragon*, p. 156; Raynal, *Histoire du Berry*, vol. iii, pp. 157-9; Poinson, *Histoire générale de la Champagne*, vol. ii, p. 59; Boutiot, *Histoire de la ville de Troyes*, vol. iii, pp. 110-11.

and the ubiquity of those disseminators of disease may be inferred from the fact that even in well-to-do homes it was necessary to impress upon children that they should not catch and kill lice and fleas when company was present. Still more dangerous, alike in town and in country, were the general absence of all sanitary measures and the general lack of all sanitary precautions. In the absence of drainage systems, of scavengers, and of dustmen, dung and filth were left in houses, or piled up in cottage gardens, or tipped out into town streets, and the situation was made worse by the countryman's habit of living in proximity to his live stock and the town-dweller's predilection for joining dove-cots, pigsties, and chicken-runs to his abode. There were laws prohibiting the keeping of domestic animals in cities, but they were not observed; and the streets were used as runs for pigs, geese, ducks, hens, and dogs, the nuisance from dogs being lessened from time to time by periodic campaigns of destruction. Narrow, unpaved, and unpurified by sunshine, the streets were choked with mud, filth, and stagnant water. Few houses had sanitary conveniences, and what is now sent down the drain was then dumped in the public thoroughfare. Liquids, poured from windows, percolated slowly through mud-choked gutters till they reached some open and noisome drainage ditch. The solids were piled at the doors, and there, in company with rotting fish, putrid meat, and other malodorous refuse, awaited a removal which was usually long deferred. Even when carted away, they were not taken far, and at the beginning of the sixteenth century the walls of Paris were overtopped by the heaps of rubbish which had been shot against them for centuries past, a state of affairs remedied in 1512, not for hygienic reasons, but in apprehension of an English attack. Travellers complained that the stench of Paris was such that for days it could not be got out of the nostrils, and that protection could scarcely be gained by carrying a bunch of flowers or a bottle of scent.¹

The persistence of disease and the prevalence of high

¹ Franklin, *Paris et les parisiens au seizième siècle*, pp. 8, 24-5, 407; Boissonnade, *Essai sur l'organisation du travail en Poitou*, Société des Antiquaires de l'Ouest, *Mémoires*, Series II, vol. xxi, pp. 219, 339; Barthélemy, *Histoire de la ville de Châlons-sur-Marne*, 2nd edit., p. 131; Christian, *Études sur le Paris d'autrefois. Les médecins*, pp. 7-9.

mortality rates were inevitable accompaniments of such conditions. The plague in particular looms large in all pictures of contemporary life. Jean d'Auton records its presence in all parts of France in the year 1502, when it raged in Bourbonnais and Berry, in Poitou and Saintonge, in Touraine and Anjou, in Paris, Orleans, and elsewhere in the Île-de-France, and in many other districts. He describes some of the consequences of the visitation. In some localities towns and villages had been entirely deserted, the inhabitants having fled to the woods in the hope of saving their lives. There they lived, like brute beasts, in danger, hunger, and discomfort; and not a few of them, men as well as children, were attacked and eaten by wolves. Grenoble was a centre of infection in the years from 1482 to 1485, during which time half the inhabitants fled, and those only remained who could not afford to decamp. Such was the general terror that, as soon as a case was detected, the hapless patient was chased from the town, and left without food or shelter to perish in the neighbouring fields; nor did the fate of these wretched outcasts excite any pity until a charitable Dauphinois gentleman was moved to bequeath a sum of 3,000 *écus* to found an asylum for their reception. Their extrusion did not banish the plague. In 1493, 1497, 1518, 1520 to 1522, and 1525 the pestilence again raged, and again Grenoble was half deserted. Recorded incidents make it plain that compassion for the afflicted had not been learnt in the school of adversity; in 1525 a priest was driven from the town, because he had exposed himself to infection in hearing the confession of a penitent, and a doctor, going out to pay a professional visit in the country, was warned that he would not be readmitted, if found to have attended a case of plague.¹

In justice to Grenoble it must be said that its cruel precautions were in no way exceptional, for, wherever the pestilence made its dread appearance, it evoked the same panic selfishness and the same callous indifference to the claims of humanity. There was plague at Troyes in all the years from 1491 to 1499 and another epidemic from 1529 to 1531. The town cared only for its own protection without a thought

¹ Jean d'Auton, *Chroniques de Louis XII*, ed. R. de Maulde-la-Clavière, vol. iii, pp. 101-2; Prudhomme, *Histoire de Grenoble*, pp. 272-3, 283, 294, 309, 313, 322.

for the welfare of those who were struck down or for the misery and distress in their afflicted homes. A woman who had lost her husband and six children was forcibly evicted by the destruction of her clothes and furniture and the partial demolition of her house; and another home, in which a father and four children had died, was given to the flames. A man, whose wife had perished, was left to dig her grave with his own hands, and to carry her body to it on his shoulders. Over and above the mortality and distress a severe economic loss was often inflicted by these visitations, which paralysed agriculture, interrupted industry, and drove away trade, a typical example being furnished by Montdidier, which for three years out of ten was unable to hold its fairs. Paris was scarcely ever free: 1510, 1516, 1519, 1522, 1531, 1533, 1545, 1546, 1548, 1553, 1562, 1563, and 1568 were all years in which the city was in the grip of plague more or less severe; in 1522 the hospital patients died at the rate of a hundred a day, and an anxious Municipality learnt with concern that there was not a street in the city free from infection.¹

It was beginning slowly to be realized that the hold upon the population which had been obtained by the plague and other diseases imperatively demanded a new attention to questions of public health. In Paris the Parlement took up the problem of the sewers, and at the same time the Prévôt was bidden to remedy the filth of the streets. Fruiterers and market-gardeners were forbidden to dress vegetable plots with road scrapings or pig droppings, and were required to withhold cucumbers and melons from the markets when dysentery was rife. In many towns attempts were made to discourage the depositing of filth in public places or its disposal by tipping it over the sides of the quays. At Rennes a progressive note was struck in the purchase of a municipal dust-cart, which was sent round the city three times a week to collect refuse. Moreover, the bakers in the town were required, not only to use good flour, but to wear clean shirts

¹ Boutiot, *Histoire de la ville de Troyes*, vol. iii, pp. 111, 205-6, 343; Beauvillé, *Histoire de la ville de Montdidier*, 2nd edit., vol. i, pp. 181, 186, 189; Franklin, *Paris et les parisiens au seizième siècle*, pp. 33-4; Fagniez, 'Livre de raison de Me. Nicolas Versoris', Société de l'Histoire de Paris, *Mémoires*, vol. xii, p. 118.

and to have their hair cut and their beards trimmed every three weeks. Some of the regulations for enforcing cleanliness throw a revealing light upon the habits of the people, dealing as they do with the depositing by stall-holders of refuse in the markets, the throwing by householders of dirt, dead animals, and skins into public streets and fountains, the tipping by butchers, fishmongers, and cook-shop keepers of sheep's trotters, blood, and intestines in streets or gutters, the washing of dirty linen in public watercourses or fountains, and the employment of these sources of water-supply as receptacles for slops or sewage. In Rouen a severe visitation of the plague in the years 1508-10 occasioned an outburst of regulation, in which further trial was given to measures already adopted experimentally in the capital. To avert divine displeasure, a moral purge was taken in hand, and efforts were made to suppress gaming, blasphemy, and vice. Of the hygienic precautions which were taken some were reasonable and some ill advised. No objection could be taken to the appointment of a medical officer for the city, nor to the overhaul of its hospital system. Nothing but good could have been expected to come of a general cleansing of streets and houses; nor was the wholesale removal of tramps and vagabonds, who were believed to be disseminators of infection, a matter to occasion surprise. Of more questionable expediency was the requirement that every infected house and all its inmates should be marked with a white cross, for although the healthy might be thereby preserved from dangerous contacts, the gain was more than offset by the harm done in advertising the prevalence of danger. Wise or unwise, the rule and its ancillary by-laws were enforced with resolute vigour. A person detected in the unauthorized removal of a white cross was condemned to the loss of his right hand, and the death penalty was imposed upon any person who could be proved to have sold infected clothing. Convalescents, and all who had been in contact with them, were relegated to quarantine for a period of forty days, and closure orders were enforced against every shop and every inn in which a case of plague had occurred.¹

¹ Franklin, *Paris et les parisiens au seizième siècle*, p. 38; Lespinasse, *Les Métiers et corporations de la ville de Paris*, vol. i, p. 303; Dupuy, *Histoire de la réunion de la Bretagne à la France*, vol. ii, p. 386; Rebillon, *Recherches sur les*

Under the spur of recurrent disasters the question of public assistance for the sick, the needy, and the infirm was pressed upon the attention of the age. Earlier generations had not neglected to render such assistance, an adequate provision of hospitals, homes, and leper-houses having been made in the Middle Ages by ecclesiastical and municipal authorities; but the buildings reared by earlier charity had fallen into decay during the wars, and long periods of disturbance had left a legacy of confusion and corruption in the administration. The restoration of the buildings, the reinvigoration of the service, the provision of new asylums in places which needed them, and a general overhaul of charitable institutions and extension of charitable activities were now undertaken, together constituting a notable achievement to be placed to the credit of the age. As with sanitation, there was plenty of room for improvement. Alms-houses and lazar-houses, hospitals for the sick, infirmaries for the aged, homes for foundlings, asylums for benighted travellers were one and all scantily equipped and badly managed. In many of them, for example, there were few bills for fuel, because fires were an indulgence rarely accorded to the inmates. The management of them was usually inefficient or dishonest, despite the fact that a warden was required to give security for good behaviour. Some scandalous abuses were about to come to light, investigation revealing that endowments were dissipated, that title-deeds were missing, and that inmates were being turned adrift to beg through the countryside. In one hospital the Superintendent had driven the men from their dormitory and converted the room into a stable for his horse. In the same institution the door of the chapel had perforce to be kept locked, since the patients, deprived by the negligence of the architect of other and more usual facilities, were accustomed to resort to the place when in need, not of spiritual, but of physical relief. Even when there was no incapacity or laxity in the management, some shocking things were occasioned by inadequacy of accommodation. Under the pressure of a growing popula-

anciennes corporations ouvrières et marchandes de la ville de Rennes, pp. 74-7; Giry, *Histoire de Saint-Omer*, pp. 260-2; Lormier, *Ordonnances contre la peste et autres ordonnances concernant la salubrité publique dans la ville de Rouen de 1507 à 1513*, pp. i-vi.

tion the number of patients in the Hôtel-Dieu of Paris had become so great that it was necessary to put them ten or twelve in a bed, and that practice was found to be 'very harmful, for when one wishes to sleep, another disturbs him, and, when he ought to perspire, uncovers him'. Nor was this the worst, for the patient with the plague or the pox would infect his bed-fellows, whilst the death of one would have upon the others a terrifying effect, most prejudicial to convalescence. In 1508 the Prévôt des Marchands made a damaging report upon the evils of a system which not only did not insist upon, but did not even make the smallest attempt to provide for, the segregation of cases of venereal disease, to the imminent peril of other patients, of all the nurses, and of the entire domestic staff.

To remedy these and kindred abuses became an object of municipal policy and a mainspring of private munificence. Gifts to hospitals were numerous and substantial. Jean Briçonnet, a President of the Chambre des Comptes, gave 175 *l.t.* a year to the Hôpital des Enfants-Rouges, to provide the inmates with breakfast and to secure for them the services of a matron. The Hôpital de la Trinité and the Hôpital du Saint-Esprit-en-Grève, which were also orphanages, received similar benefactions from other sources, whilst a tradesman and his wife gave money to provide the means for a weekly distribution of bread, meat, and wine among the prisoners of the Paris jails. The Hôtel-Dieu, the overcrowded asylum of the sick poor, was not forgotten: donations were bestowed upon it, and were used to further the policy of enlargement which was adopted at this time. Experience having shown that some auxiliary building was wanted for use as an isolation ward, it was decided to rebuild and reopen a couple of annexes formerly occupied by the hospital, the one for men in the Faubourg Saint-Germain, and the other for women in the Faubourg Saint-Honoré, church collections and private donations being solicited to defray the cost of the extension. A later proposal for building another annex near the Abbey of Saint-Germain-des-Prés was entertained for a time, but was eventually defeated by the interested opposition of the monks. In 1525 Jean Briçonnet advocated a policy of specialization: the Hôtel-Dieu was to be reserved for non-contagious illnesses, and

other hospitals were to take each its own particular category of patient—women, children, accident cases, lunatics. The idea was not wholly novel, for some such distinctive institutions did as a matter of fact already exist. The Hospice des Quinze-Vingts took in the blind; the Haudriettes offered an asylum for widows; the Filles-Dieu provided hospitality for strangers in transit through the capital; and women and girls coming to Paris in search of work were cared for by the Sisters of St. Catherine. Other Sisters of Charity tended the patients in the poor-houses, cottage hospitals, and leper-houses which were provided all over the country by the generosity of religious Houses or the public spirit of the lay inhabitants.¹

In families possessing a little money the care of the aged was often the subject of some scheme of family arrangement, a person who could no longer support himself by his own exertions making over his property in consideration of maintenance. The nature and amount of the maintenance were usually specified with precision. Thus, when an infirm octogenarian of Sceaux made over to his son his house, garden, vineyards, and other lands, he stipulated that he should receive board and lodging in the son's home, together with suitable clothing, a ration of a pint of wine daily, and an allowance for pocket-money of 12*d.* every Sunday and 3 *sols* on each of the major feasts. A similar bargain made in another family provided in addition for suitable religious ministrations and for burial in a selected spot. Sometimes the old people had the good sense to preserve their independence and to spare the young ones the burden of an unwanted guest. Thus the widow of a Paris hotel-keeper, in making over her property to a married son, bargained for the provision of suitable lodgings in a named parish, in which she wished to end her days. In the absence of relatives able and willing to tend old age the bargain would be made with

¹ Imbart de la Tour, *Les Origines de la Réforme*, vol. i, pp. 504-9; Latouche, *La Vie en Bas-Quercy du XIV^e au XVIII^e siècle*, pp. 344-7; Dupont-Ferrier, *Les Officiers royaux des bailliages et sénéchaussées*, p. 305; Poëte, *Une Vie de cité. Paris*, vol. ii, pp. 191-2; Bonnardot, *Histoire générale de Paris. Registre des délibérations du Bureau de la Ville de Paris*, vol. i, pp. 406-7; Campardon and Tuetey, *Inventaire des registres des insinuations du Châtelet de Paris*, pp. xxvi-xxviii; Bezard, *La Vie rurale dans le sud de la région parisienne de 1450 à 1560*, pp. 279-85; Franklin, *Paris et les parisiens au seizième siècle*, pp. 142-3.

some monastery or convent, an arrangement which combined with the assurance of maintenance the spiritual advantage of an undistracted preparation for death. Not that spiritual opportunities produced indifference to temporal cares, for it is noticeable that in most of such contracts the canny grantor left nothing to chance, the duty of the religious House in the provision of lodging, board, and clothing being laid down with particularity. An abjuration of pomps and vanities evidently did not preclude a desire for the reasonable enjoyment of creature comforts.¹

In conclusion we may glance at the manners and temper of the age. The most lenient critic must perforce admit that manners were rude and morals debased. Though dominant to outward appearance, religion was a matter of forms and ceremonies; in the empty ritual of prescribed observances there was nothing to elevate conduct or ennoble belief; and the laity found no incentive to godly living in the example of worldly prelates and of ignorant and licentious priests. Superstition flourished, and there was widespread belief in sorcery and witchcraft and the efficacy of charms, amulets, and spells. Blasphemy, immorality, drunkenness, and gluttony were prevailing sins. Public opinion did not condemn the illicit amour; bastards were openly acknowledged and brought up as younger sons; there were brothels everywhere; and the terms 'housekeeper' and 'servant-maid' were habitually used with a signification which leaves little doubt about the moral standard of the age. Grossly self-indulgent, men were also violent and cruel: husbands beat their wives; parents thrashed their children; village fought with village; street brawls incessantly impaired the peace of towns; and men killed, as the savage kills, from sheer lust of blood. Yet beside much that was coarse and brutal and degrading there was a simple and unaffected gaiety, which manifested itself in an almost child-like delight in pleasure and amusement. Resolute to get from life all the fun that it could be made to yield, the age let slip no pretext for amusement and no excuse for jollity. The state entry of a great person, an assembly, a fair, or, in private life, a baptism, a betrothal, a wedding, a family gathering, a corporate reunion were all

¹ Campardon and Tuetey, *op. cit.*, pp. xix-xxi.

treated as occasions for feasting, dancing, and games. Every Sunday, when church was over, the working classes repaired to the inn, to drink, to play cards, and to dice till the time should come for an adjournment to the open air for contests in archery and the playing of games. Village vied with village in wrestling matches and sporting contests, or, if amusement were sought at home, the married would contend with the single. For the upper classes there were tournaments and jousts, receptions and banquets; for the burghers there were guild processions and corporate feasts; for the people there were morality plays and acrobatic performances and combats of animals; and for all classes there was the universally popular recreation of the dance. They danced in the palace, in the manor-house, in the guild-hall, and upon the village green; they danced after their tournaments, after their banquets, after their sports; they danced on every public holiday, and danced again on all the high-days of the Church. Often, when they danced, they would sing; 'and on Christmas evening the children would go from door to door, chanting popular canticles, in the hope of picking up a few stray pence'. And thus yet another contrast is revealed by an age compact of contradictions and inconsistencies. In the kingdom which Louis XII bequeathed to his successor there were wealth and poverty, splendour and squalor, luxury and want, progress and reaction, growth and decay; refined and cultured tastes coexisted with brutality and violence; elegance and beauty stood out against a dark background of noisome hovels and insanitary slums; and amid the ever present menace of famine, disease, and war there reigned a gay insouciance, a care-free enjoyment of the pleasures of life. The invincible cheerfulness of the people is a feature which must arrest the attention in any survey of the age. In the years which had elapsed since Louis XI died the subjects of Charles VIII and Louis XII had acquired the precious gift of a calm confidence in themselves, and despite much that was calculated to make them fearful they could yet dare to be tranquil and happy and blithe.¹

¹ Fagniez, *L'Économie sociale de la France sous Henri IV*, p. 62; R. de Maulde-la-Clavière, *Les Origines de la Révolution française au commencement du XVI^e siècle*, passim; Antonio de Beatis, *Voyage du Cardinal d'Aragon*, p. 258; Imbart de la Tour, *Les Origines de la Réforme*, vol. i, p. 302.

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